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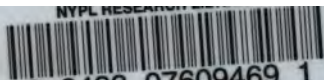
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*The*  
**MORNINGGLORY  
CLUB**

**GEORGE A. KYLE**



# **The Morning Glory Club**



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*Barbara Wallace*

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*Barbara Wallace*  
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# The Morning Glory Club

By George A. Kyle

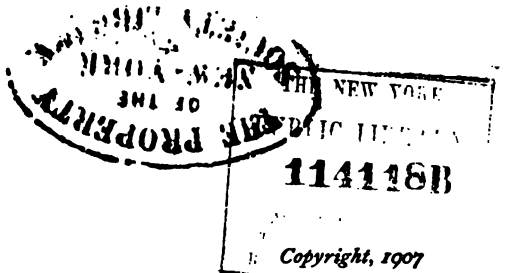
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# The Morning Glory Club

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## Chapter I

### The Wheels Begin to Move

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"EZRA, this is a morning long to be remembered," said Mrs. Tweedie, as she looked up from the undulating top of a huge cake which, with the skill of a professional plasterer, she was bedaubing with a dark brown paste.

"I hope so, my dear," her husband replied, smilingly, as he put his paper aside.

"Sometime this house may bear a tablet of bronze," continued Mrs. Tweedie, "on which, in effect, will be graven that here was founded by the women of Manville an organization that startled the community."

"My only regret is that I shall not be here to see it — I mean the tablet, of course," said Ezra.

"We shall prove," Mrs. Tweedie went on with her eyes fixed dreamily on a distant corner of the kitchen, "we shall prove that the accusation which you made in anger one week ago to-night, that 'women are the cause of all of the trouble in



the world,' is false! False as the affection of men!"

Ezra's smile faded to a look that suggested a complication of homesickness and *mal de mer*. The incident to which Mrs. Tweedie referred was not their first quarrel. The first had taken place years before, and ever since Ezra had been different.

"My dear," he replied, weakly, attempting not to let his feelings show in his voice, "you always accomplish whatever you attempt."

"And why, Ezra, why do I succeed?" (Mrs. Tweedie was given to boasting when alone with her little, ladylike husband.) "Because," she continued, replying to her own question, "I possess and use that rare virtue called tact."

"True, my dear, very true," Ezra acknowledged, meekly. "I have known always that you had enough for two." He might have added truthfully that, had it not been for her remarkable tact, and the fact that one of her relatives had indiscreetly died intestate during their courtship, he would not have married her.

The income which "dear cousin John's" carelessness and the statutes gave them was small; only Mrs. Tweedie's tact made it possible for her

family of four to exist in the sham style which they affected. Despite her tact, their credit was constantly stretched and perilously near to the C. O. D. point; in fact, the feelings of all the tradesmen of Manville were correctly described when the milkman vowed that the Tweedies would be supplied from the bottom of the can until they had settled for the top. Considered from every point of view the Tweedies were strange people.

The idea of a club for women was not new to the world, but to the New England town of Manville it was as new as the newest baby. The germ had taken up its abode in Mrs. Tweedie's head a week before, and since its arrival had buzzed so furiously that she was conscious of nothing else.

Two hours after her conversation with Ezra, Mrs. Tweedie was ready to meet the ladies whom she had invited to take part in the materialization of her idea. When the door-bell rang announcing the first arrival, she hastened to the parlour and assumed a becoming attitude, while Ezra, who impersonated Dora, their maid, when she was otherwise occupied, went to the door.

"Mrs. Flint, my dear," Ezra announced a moment later, as he bowed the lady named into the parlour, and then vanished. Mrs. Tweedie was

very fond of Mrs. Flint, her beloved pastor's wife, and greeted her with as much cordiality as it was possible for her to display. The chief reason for her fondness was the fact that Mrs. Flint belonged to one of the oldest families in the State. Her blood was as blue as the bluest blue, and her ancestry could be traced back into a delightful abyss of years. Mrs. Tweedie had a profound respect for such things — she had ancestors herself.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Flint, after they had chatted about little nothings for five minutes, "how have you succeeded? Was your club idea well received?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Tweedie.

"And did many promise to come?"

"Every one on whom I called was delighted, and promised to be here this morning," said Mrs. Tweedie, proudly.

"Very encouraging, I'm sure," murmured Mrs. Flint, as she glanced about the room and noticed that there was dust on the family Bible. Mrs. Tweedie knew it was there. She also knew that Mrs. Flint knew, and was annoyed.

"I have heard that your son William has returned," observed Mrs. Tweedie, hoping to divert Mrs. Flint's mind from the dusty Bible to a sub-

ject that could not be wholly agreeable to the minister's wife, if the rumours which had reached Mrs. Tweedie were founded on fact.

"Yes, college life is *so* trying for a young man at William's critical age. He seems to have broken down completely," sadly replied the fond mamma of one hundred and eighty pounds of beef, bone, and deviltry.

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear of his condition, but rejoiced to know that I have been incorrectly informed concerning his reason for leaving college," said Mrs. Tweedie. "You must be very happy with him at home again after such a long absence."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Flint, telling one of those weak little lies that we all indulge in when it seems to be really necessary.

Mrs. Tweedie's feminine instinct told her the truth, and she generously dropped William for something more closely related to the club idea.

"Oh, I have invited Mrs. Stout to join. What do you think of her?" she asked, suddenly.

"She does not attend our church — of course that would make no difference, but —" The minister's wife hesitated, and raised her eyes significantly.

"Her grammar is shocking — she speaks so plainly," said Mrs. Tweedie, her nose in air.

"And her manners and dress are —"

"Extraordinary," prompted Mrs. Flint.

"The very word."

"She has, probably, admirable qualities, but —"

"No doubt, except — there's the bell!" And then Mrs. Tweedie added in a whisper, "I would not have this repeated for worlds."

Just then Mrs. Stout entered the room unannounced.

"My dear Mrs. Stout, good morning," said Mrs. Tweedie. "We were just this moment speaking of you."

"Was you now?" smilingly responded Mrs. Stout, as she sat down in the largest chair in the room and began fanning herself with a photograph that she took from a table. "How d'y do, Mis' Flint. I ain't set eyes on you since our Fast Day union meetin'. How's the parson? I heard he was feelin' kinder streaked."

"Quite well, thank you," replied Mrs. Flint, rather coldly.

Mrs. Stout was the wife of Peter Stout, grocer, and the mother of three boys. Though her grammar, manners, and dress did not reach to Mrs.

Tweedie's lofty ideals, she had many friends in Manville among those who did not pretend to be more than they were. Her family — of course she had a father and mother, but her grandfathers and grandmothers — no one had ever taken the pains to draw the likeness of a tree and write on its naked branches the names of her ancestors. Despite the lack of grandfathers and grandmothers, she had a large measure of common sense, and a big heart.

"We don't seem to be crowded here," remarked Mrs. Stout, after a moment's pause. "Anybody else comin'?"

"We hope so, but it is early yet, you know, only half-past ten," explained Mrs. Tweedie.

"Early? Good land!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout. "I've been up these five hours and done all my work. Oh, there was somethin' I wanted to ask perticler. Is Lizzie Sawyer goin' to join?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Tweedie, and wondered what was coming next.

"Well," said Mrs. Stout, confidentially, "the reason I wanted to know was that she and I don't get along very well together, but there, I guess we can manage somehow to keep from clashin'."

Mrs. Tweedie saw rough weather ahead, and

proceeded to pour oil upon the waters before the storm broke.

"Miss Sawyer was one of the first asked to join," she replied. "She is an exceptionally well-educated woman, and has signified her willingness to read several papers on vital topics before the club when we are ready for such work."

"Papers? Newspapers?" Mrs. Stout asked, with a puzzled look.

"No, indeed! Papers — essays on — on —" Mrs. Tweedie tried to reduce her language to Mrs. Stout's mental level in vain.

"Oh, how stoopid I am!" Mrs. Stout interrupted, thereby unconsciously rescuing Mrs. Tweedie from her difficulty, "I understand now. I s'pose she'll try to tell us a lot about religion, and —"

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Tweedie, quickly, "I think not. Would it be wise to discuss religion at our meetings? I am sure that the *other sex* never tolerate it in their organizations."

"I s'pose you mean the men?" queried Mrs. Stout.

"I do."

"Well, that's true enough, I guess, but it ain't because they don't think it's wise. It's because

men don't naturally hanker after religion. There's my husband, a good 'nough man, but I can't get him to go to meetin' to save me, though he will go fishin' spite of all I can say or do."

"Really!" gasped Mrs. Flint. "Does he really fish on the Sabbath?"

"He certainly does," replied Mrs. Stout, "jest as reg'lar as he eats his vi't'ls."

Mrs. Tweedie and Mrs. Flint were horribly shocked, and to their cultured minds perhaps "vi't'ls" was quite as shocking as Sabbath fishing.

"And what else are we goin' to do besides havin' papers read?" continued Mrs. Stout.

"We hope," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "to spend our time in the study and discussion of subjects which will be uplifting, that will make ourselves, and aid us in helping others, to be stronger, morally and intellectually."

"You don't mean it!" said Mrs. Stout, with mock gravity. "And when we ain't doin' that I s'pose we'll be talkin' about other folks and their businesses."

"I trust not," replied Mrs. Tweedie, much distressed. "Of course, some people are improperly interested in the affairs of others, but we hope that



those so inclined will not become members of our club."

"Well, I hope so, too," said Mrs. Stout, with a suspicious twinkle in her eyes. "But it's hard, dreadful hard, Mis' Tweedie, to get a crowd of women folks together without some one sayin' somethin' about somebody that they wouldn't have said if she was there."

Mrs. Tweedie was as near to tears of mortification as a woman of her kind ever gets. She had never realized before how brutally truthful Mrs. Stout could be.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, abruptly changing the subject, "is Miss Wallace, the school-teacher that boards with you, goin' to belong?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Tweedie. "She is heartily in sympathy with us, but will not be able to attend many meetings because of her work."

"I'm real glad that she's goin' to join, I like her," said Mrs. Stout, simply, and she meant it. Miss Wallace was likable, but not many in Manville had discovered her good qualities. "There's somebody else!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, as she heard the bell which rang at that moment, and then added, quickly, "Excuse *me*, of course you don't go to the door when you have a girl."

A soft voice was heard asking for Mrs. Tweedie, and then the masculine tones of Dora inviting some one to come in.

"Oh, is it you, Miss Sawyer?" said Mrs. Tweedie, all smiles, when the newcomer appeared in the doorway. "We are so glad that you could come. Of course, you know Mrs. Stout, and —"

Miss Sawyer bowed stiffly.

"Glad to see you," said Mrs. Stout, telling the lie that has been told oftener than any other.

Miss Elizabeth Sawyer was a lady of — her age does not matter. She was tall and very slight, her hair was gray, and her eyes were the bulging, staring kind that always seemed about to jump from their sockets, caused in some degree, perhaps, by the black-rimmed eye-glasses secured by a heavy cord which she constantly wore. She had the reputation of being very intellectual. The very person, Mrs. Tweedie thought, to shine in a woman's club.

When Miss Sawyer spied Mrs. Flint she rushed into her arms. She considered Mrs. Flint as near her equal mentally as it was possible for any woman in Manville to be. They sat down together, and cooed for several minutes in the most impolite manner possible, so Mrs. Tweedie thought,

probably because she could not hear a word that they said. Mrs. Stout moved uneasily, and Mrs. Tweedie coughed several times, but with no effect.

"Ain't it most time we was doin' somethin' about this club we came here to get up?" Mrs. Stout asked, impatiently, when she could contain herself no longer.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "when the others are ready; and I was waiting—I had hoped that my daughter Fanny, she is to be one of us, you know, would be here by this time. I can't imagine—" Mrs. Tweedie was interrupted by the entrance of her son Thomas, the bad angel of the Tweedie household.

"Ma," he blubbered, "Dora won't give me a piece of cake. Can't I have some, ma?" This exhibition of domestic turmoil made Mrs. Tweedie very angry, and it was with difficulty that she controlled herself.

"Thomas, leave the room immediately," she commanded, sternly.

"Am I goin' to have any cake?" the young man demanded when he saw that tears were of no avail. •

"Thomas, I insist upon your leaving the room

at once," replied his mother, firmly. The ladies were watching breathlessly the contest between mother and son.

"I won't go 'less I can have some cake," said the boy, defiantly. Mrs. Tweedie went to the door, and called for Dora. The silence that followed was so impressive that Thomas would have succumbed had it lasted a moment longer than it did. When Dora came Mrs. Tweedie, with much determination and latent anger, said:

"Dora, assist Thomas from the room." Dora was delighted; here was an opportunity for revenge. Her hand went out quickly toward her prey, but Thomas dodged.

"I won't go!" he screamed.

"Thomas," said Mrs. Tweedie, sadly, "shall I call your father?" A broad grin spread over the boy's face, and Dora snickered.

"I ain't 'fraid of him," he said, saucily.

"Take him away instantly, Dora!" Mrs. Tweedie ordered, angrily. Dora was more successful in her next attempt to capture Thomas, though a vase was broken and two chairs were overturned while she was dragging him from the room.

"Ladies," said Mrs. Tweedie, in a choking

voice, as she removed her glasses and wiped them, "I cannot tell you how grieved I am to have our meeting interrupted —" A crash was heard at that moment, the sound coming from the direction of the kitchen.

"I guess somebody's dropped somethin'," suggested Mrs. Stout. Her surmise was correct. Dora had dropped Thomas, and dropped him hard. Mrs. Tweedie wiped her eyes, put on her glasses, and wondered how much damage had been done.

"Thomas is a very impulsive child," she said, "I hope that you will overlook this rare breach in his customary commendable deportment. And now, had we not better make a start at least on the work for which we are gathered?"

"I should say it was time," replied Mrs. Stout. "Up to now we've talked about everything from here to Halifax 'cept business."

"The *other sex*," continued Mrs. Tweedie, after listening a moment to be sure that her domestic affairs were running smoothly, or, at least, noiselessly, "the *other sex*," she repeated, "have their lodges and clubs, why should not we band ourselves together in a similar manner, and become, in the community, a great power for good?"

"Excuse *me*," interrupted Mrs. Stout, "but

don't you think it's terrible hot here? I'm 'most melted."

Miss Sawyer looked up in astonishment.

"Why, Mrs. Stout, I am positively chilly," she said, coughing dismally.

"I will open a window." Mrs. Tweedie spoke impatiently as she got up and attempted to raise a window. It resisted her efforts. "Really, I can't imagine why it will not open — I'll try the other." She did so, but again her efforts were unsuccessful.

"I guess it's the damp weather," suggested Mrs. Stout.

"I suppose it is," replied Mrs. Tweedie, as she went to the door and called for Dora, and then by way of explanation turned to the ladies and added, "Dora is very strong."

"Did you call, ma'am?" asked Dora, a moment later, as she appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, I want you to open a window," Mrs. Tweedie replied, shortly. Dora advanced on one of the stubborn windows and exerted all her strength. Conversation ceased, all eyes were upon Dora. Failing at one window, she attempted another with the same result. The windows could not be opened by woman.

"I can't do it, ma'm," said Dora, her face very red.

"Call Mr. Tweedie," Mrs. Tweedie commanded.

"One of those windows shall be opened!"

Dora hurried from the room, and then Mrs. Stout laughed irritatingly.

"Tell us, pray," said Mrs. Tweedie, haughtily, "the cause of your mirth."

"You must excuse *me*, ladies," Mrs. Stout began, but another burst of laughter that she could not control prevented her from continuing for several minutes. "It struck me as awful funny that we should come here to get up a woman's club, and then have to call in a man the first thing," she explained.

"Were not the *other sex* created physically stronger than woman because it was intended that they should perform just such labour?" Mrs. Tweedie asked quickly, but before Mrs. Stout had time to reply Mr. Tweedie came into the room.

"How can I serve you, ladies?" he asked as he bowed low and smiled.

"Open a window, please," said Mrs. Tweedie.

"Certainly, my dear," Mr. Tweedie replied as he went to a window, and, without any apparent effort, raised it. "There you are," he said, smil-

ingly. "Anything else to-day?" (Once upon a time Mr. Tweedie had been a salesman in a dry goods store.)

"No," Mrs. Tweedie replied, sharply. She was displeased with him because of his untidy appearance, and wished him to leave at once. He did so, making some senseless remark about the weather as he crossed the room on his way out.

"Now for goodness' sake let's begin," said Mrs. Stout when the window was open and the incident closed.

"Yes, do," echoed Mrs. Flint.

"Well," Mrs. Tweedie began, "I have been reading recently a treatise on parliamentary procedure, and if I am not in error the selection of a presiding officer should be our first business. Am I not right, Miss Sawyer?"

"Yes," replied Miss Sawyer. "And I do hope that you will be our first president, Mrs. Tweedie."

"Oh, but I am not competent," Mrs. Tweedie protested, modestly.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Stout, "take the place, we'll never get anything done if you don't."

"But, really —" Mrs. Tweedie insisted upon weakly resisting.

"You, Mrs. Tweedie, above all others," inter-



posed Mrs. Flint, "are the best qualified to lead us."

Mrs. Tweedie appeared to be resigned to her fate.

"I suppose," she sighed, "that if you *all* insist (there were three who represented the ladies of Manville), it is my duty to comply with your wishes. We will immediately proceed to ballot."

"Ought we to hold a caucus?" inquired Miss Sawyer while Mrs. Tweedie was passing paper and pencils to the ladies.

"Why, what *is* a caucus?" asked Mrs. Tweedie in astonishment.

"A caucus," replied Miss Sawyer, "is a meeting held previous to an election. The men invariably hold them."

"Then I am very sure that they are not proper," said Mrs. Tweedie, positively. "Do you know anything about them, Mrs. Flint?"

The pastor's wife rolled her eyes skyward before replying.

"I have heard Mr. Flint say that caucuses were not proper for decent men to attend," she replied.

"And my husband," Mrs. Stout retorted, quickly, "says that a caucus is the only place where a vote counts."

"It surely cannot be necessary in a woman's club," said Mrs. Tweedie. "Now if you will write on your slips of paper the name of the one whom you wish to be our president, I will appoint Mrs. Stout a committee to collect and count the ballots."

"All right, but I can't pass my hat," replied Mrs. Stout, "because if I took it off I'd never get it on straight again. Put them in my hand, I promise not to look." Mrs. Stout proceeded to collect and count the ballots.

"Ladies," said Mrs. Flint while they were awaiting the result, "this is a day long to be remembered. We have voted for the first time."

"But not the last," said Mrs. Stout, "our time is comin'. Now if you're ready I'll tell you who's been elected. Mrs. Tweedie has got all the votes and is elected president. Speech!"

"Really," responded Mrs. Tweedie, "there is no time for a speech even if I could make one. Of course I am very grateful. We will now ballot for a secretary and treasurer."

The performance of voting was twice again enacted with the following result: Mrs. Stout was elected treasurer, and for the office of secretary there was a tie between Miss Sawyer and Mrs. Flint.

"There's a conundrum for you to settle, Mis' President," chuckled Mrs. Stout.

"I am sure that I have no idea what should be done," replied Mrs. Tweedie, much perplexed.

"S'pose we call in Mr. Tweedie and let him vote," suggested Mrs. Stout, who was bubbling with mirth.

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Mrs. Tweedie. "Give to one of the *other sex* the privilege of suffrage in a woman's club? Never!"

"Never!" piped Mrs. Flint and Miss Sawyer in chorus.

"Why not let the president vote again?" said Mrs. Flint. "I am sure that I would willingly abide by her decision. Would that method be satisfactory to you, Miss Sawyer?"

"I was about to suggest," replied Miss Sawyer, "that I would gladly withdraw in your favour."

"Oh, no, indeed, Miss Sawyer, I could not let you make such a sacrifice."

"Really, Mrs. Flint, it would be no —"

"No, no, don't speak of it again, I beg of you."

"But, my dear Mrs. Flint, it seems to me that you —"

"I'm sure it is very good of you to say so, but I really could not allow —"

"Please, Mrs. Flint."

"No, in fact *I* insist upon withdrawing in your favour. There, now please let us not say anything more about it."

"That's right, give in, Miss Sawyer, we ain't gettin' ahead fast enough to suit me," said Mrs. Stout. Miss Sawyer succumbed with a sigh. "Now," Mrs. Stout continued, "I'd like to ask why nobody's made a motion."

"Motions are necessary," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "when action on any question is contemplated. The chair awaits a motion."

"Mis' President, I — " said Mrs. Stout.

"Mrs. Stout," gravely acknowledged Mrs. Tweedie.

"I motion," continued Mrs. Stout, "that we have a committee to get up some rules."

"It is **MOVED**" (Mrs. Tweedie said "moved" in capitals, hoping that Mrs. Stout would profit by it) "that a committee on rules be appointed. Are you ready for the question?"

"There ain't any question about it as I can see," said Mrs. Stout, indignantly. Mrs. Tweedie patiently explained. Then the motion was "seconded," "put" (real man-fashion), and carried unanimously, and Mrs. Stout, Mrs. Flint, and

Miss Sawyer were appointed on the committee.

"Good land!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout when the announcement was made, "I don't know anything about makin' rules 'cept for boys. Can I ask my husband to help?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Tweedie, firmly. "He would only laugh at you and us; besides, we need no assistance from the *other sex*."

"Madam President," said Mrs. Flint as she arose and smoothed down her dress. (Where she got the "Madam President" idea no one knew, but it pleased the ladies immensely.) "I have read that in Congress they have a committee on ways and means. Will it be necessary for us to have a similar one?"

"Well, I declare!" unceremoniously interrupted the uncontrollable Mrs. Stout. "The idea, and three of us married women with children. I say that when our first baby was born we was each of us appointed a committee on ways and means by the Lord."

The laughter that followed was suddenly terminated upon the second entrance of Tommy Tweedie.

"Ma," he bellowed, "Dora slapped my face

and made my nose bleed, and pa laughed at me, and said it served me right."

"My poor, dear, little son!" exclaimed Mrs. Tweedie as she rushed to him. "Tell mother how it happened," she added anxiously as she wiped the blood from the little villain's face. Tommy evaded the question by asking another.

"Can I have some cake now, ma?"

"Certainly you may. Ladies, if you will excuse me for a moment," said Mrs. Tweedie as she and Tommy left the room in quest of revenge and cake.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout after the ladies had exchanged knowing glances for a moment.

"I should say so!" piped Mrs. Flint. "I knew that he behaved badly in Sabbath school —"

"Is Mrs. Tweedie's method the wisest?" asked Miss Sawyer.

"Well," whispered Mrs. Flint, "Mrs. Tweedie is a *lovely* woman, but —"

"My experience is," interrupted Mrs. Stout, "that all boys have got just so much bad and noise in 'em, and if it don't come out one way 'twill another."

This interesting chatter was cut short by the return of Mrs. Tweedie.

"Ladies," she said, "I must again apologize for an irritating interruption. As I suspected, Dora was wholly to blame. She had the audacity to tell me that Thomas attempted to steal cake. The idea, my son steal, and with such blood in his veins."

"Folks that have boys must expect 'em to make some trouble," said Mrs. Stout, and then turning to Mrs. Flint, added, "I hear that your Willie's come home from college."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Flint, as a pink flush spread over her face, "William has returned, and is soon to enter upon a mercantile career."

"Drivin' a wagon, or a job in the factory?" asked Mrs. Stout, innocently. Mrs. Flint became red with rage, Miss Sawyer was disgusted, and Mrs. Tweedie mentally vowed that Mrs. Stout should be gotten rid of, because if she continued saying things there was no telling at what moment the club would fly to pieces.

"It don't make much difference what a boy works at," Mrs. Stout continued, wholly unaware of the passion that she had aroused, "so long's he don't do anything mean. I saw Willie Flint

goin' by my house this mornin' — he was walkin' with Miss Wallace, too, if anybody'd like to know, they made a nice lookin' couple — and I must say that he's a fine lookin' feller, too fine lookin' to follow in his father's footprints. But there, we're 'way off the track, ain't we? "

"We have digressed *slightly*," replied Mrs. Tweedie, with icy sarcasm. "Our next business will be the selection of a name for our organization. Suppose that each of us suggest a name, beginning with you, Miss Sawyer."

"Our meetings are to held in the morning — Wednesdays, I suppose?" asked Miss Sawyer.

"Yes; that was my intention," Mrs. Tweedie replied. "It's a new idea, but if any of the ladies object — "

"I don't object," interrupted Mrs. Stout, "only it's a time of day when most of us ought to be doin' somethin' else."

"I had thought," continued Miss Sawyer, completely ignoring Mrs. Stout, "that 'The Wednesday Morning Association' would be appropriate."

"Very good," said Mrs. Tweedie. "And what do you suggest, Mrs. Flint? "

"My choice," replied Mrs. Flint, with her eyes



fixed on the ceiling, "would be 'The Manville Anti-Male Club.'"

Mrs. Stout snickered, whereupon the others glared at her contemptuously.

"I feel that it is my duty to object, Mrs. Flint, to your suggestion," Mrs. Tweedie began. "We are all married — excepting one," she added, with an apologizing smile for the benefit of Miss Sawyer, who was blushing with embarrassment. "Would the name be appropriate when we consider that our life companions are of the *other sex*? Would it not reflect on our judgment in choosing a career in married life?"

"Perhaps we didn't choose," said Mrs. Stout, quickly. "Perhaps —" there is no telling what Mrs. Stout would have said if she had not been interrupted by the entrance of a plump, pink-faced young woman.

"Why, Mrs. Thornton!" exclaimed Mrs. Tweedie, as she advanced to greet the newcomer. "I am *so* glad that you came. Ladies: Mrs. Thornton. You are just in time to assist us in the naming of our club. How is that dear baby?"

"Teething," replied Mrs. Thornton, sadly, as she sat down.

"Oh, that's too bad," said Mrs. Tweedie, sympathetically.

"Yes, I'm all worn out, and I can't find a thing for the poor child to eat that agrees with him."

"What have you tried?" Miss Sawyer asked, wishing to show some interest, though she knew nothing of babies or their food.

"Everything," replied the perplexed mother. "Last week my husband brought home from town a dozen samples of prepared foods; we have tried them all, but baby's stomach is still in a wretched condition."

"Samples," sniffed Mrs. Stout, contemptuously. "Have you tried cow's milk?"

"The idea!" the ladies exclaimed, indignantly.

"Oh, I know it ain't fashionable," Mrs. Stout retorted, "but I've learned from experience that cow's milk comes next to the best thing for babies."

"Pardon me, ladies," said Mrs. Tweedie, "but I must call your attention to the fact that, admitting at the same time the necessity for babies, our club is still nameless. Mrs. Thornton, what name do you suggest?"

"Oh, dear," replied Mrs. Thornton, "don't ask me. I'm too tired to think. Whatever name is chosen will suit me."

Just then Fanny Tweedie rushed into the room with the energy of an infant cyclone. Mrs. Tweedie gazed in astonishment at her pretty, light-headed, light-hearted, impulsive daughter, as though her entrance was out of the ordinary.

"Why, Fanny!" she exclaimed. "What has detained you?"

"I've been over to Gertrude's to see her wedding things," Fanny replied, in a rather disrespectful manner, without noticing who was present, and then, in her quick, impulsive way, continued: "They're just *lovely!* Really, I never saw such awfully swell things before *anywhere*. She ought to be happy if any girl ever was. I couldn't *begin* to tell you about them in a week; and — Oh, I heard the worst stories about Billy Fl—" A warning look on her mother's face stopped Fanny on the edge of a precipice. But Billy Fl—'s mother guessed — so did the others. Mrs. Tweedie came quickly to the rescue.

"Fanny," she said, "we are trying to find a name for our club; please save your stories for another time. Mrs. Stout, have you any suitable name in mind?"

"How would 'The Manville Woman's Club' do?" replied Mrs. Stout.

"Very good," said Mrs. Tweedie, "only I am prejudiced in regard to the name of our town; it is so suggestive of the *other sex*."

"Well," replied Mrs. Stout, "we've all tried, now what do you think we ought to call ourselves, Mis' Tweedie?"

"I have considered the matter with care," replied Mrs. Tweedie. "Many names have come into my mind, but for one reason or another, all excepting one were rejected. The one that appeals to me as being the most appropriate and beautifully poetic is 'The Morning Glory Club.'"

"Beautiful," murmured the ladies, excepting Mrs. Stout, who laughed until her fat body shook.

"Excuse *me*," she said, as soon as she could control her mirth. "It's an awful pretty name, but what a beautiful bunch of morning glories us old women will make." If the ladies had been profane what opportunities Mrs. Stout had given them. She continued to laugh, however, despite their frowns.

"Madam President," said Miss Sawyer, when Mrs. Stout's laughter had subsided to a gurgling chuckle. "The name that you have suggested is admirable. The only question in my mind is concerning the word 'club.' Is 'club' more ap-

propriate than association, or some other word? ”

“ You might say congregation,” replied Mrs. Stout, “ or aggregation.”

“ Club,” replied Mrs. Tweedie, “ is the term generally used, I believe, to — ”

“ What difference does it make, anyway? ” Mrs. Stout interrupted. “ We’ll never get anything done if we don’t ’tend to business better’n we have. We’ve done about as much in two hours as the men would have done in ten minutes.”

“ Indeed,” retorted Mrs. Tweedie, “ but would they have done it as well? ” She asked the question in tones approaching anger. (Blue blood boils at 180° F.)

“ Better,” snapped Mrs. Stout, who was fast losing patience.

“ And why? ” pressed Mrs. Tweedie, determined this time to utterly squelch Mrs. Stout if such a thing were possible.

“ Because,” replied Mrs. Stout, “ they wouldn’t have talked about everything under the sun while they was doin’ it.”

“ No, my dear Mrs. Stout ” (Mrs. Tweedie knew the irony of “ my dear ” perfectly), “ it would be because the *other sex* are more experi-

enced than woman. And they are more experienced because for centuries it has been their exclusive right to organize and govern. In the meantime, we women have been kept under foot and in darkness."

"Good land!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, "perhaps *you* have been stepped on, Mis' Tweedie, but I'm mighty sure that *I* ain't! It would take an awful big foot to keep me in darkness." An embarrassing silence followed, after which Mrs. Tweedie put the question, on motion of Miss Sawyer, and the name, "The Morning Glory Club," was adopted unanimously. At the moment Mrs. Tweedie announced, "It is a vote," Ezra Tweedie, unmistakably labouring under some great excitement, appeared in the doorway.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Tweedie.

"Mrs. Brown, next door, needs you at once," he stammered.

"Oh!" exclaimed the ladies in a stage whisper. Mrs. Tweedie alone seemed not to understand.

"What has happened?" she demanded, forgetting for the moment those present. Ezra blushed, and looked about for some means of escape. (What foolishly sensitive, over modest

fools we all are at times.) "Why don't you answer?" Mrs. Tweedie almost thundered.

"It's a new baby!" Ezra blurted, and then fled.

The Morning Glory Club adjourned without form.

Late that afternoon when Mrs. Tweedie returned home she found Ezra asleep on a couch in the sitting-room, while in the kitchen her son, Thomas, and two of his chums, were trying to tar and feather a fourth urchin with molasses and the contents of a pillow. The uplifting of our morals and intellect is trying, and some personal sacrifice is necessary, she thought, as she drove the boys out of the house, and awoke her sleeping husband.

"Where's Dora?" she asked, when Ezra sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"I — I," he yawned. "Dora? Oh, she asked me if she could go out for a few moments, and I gave my consent. I hope, my dear, that I was right in so doing."

"Right? Certainly not, Ezra. How are we to have any dinner? The fire is out, Dora is out —"

"And you have been out," Ezra chuckled.

"Three out — all out!" yelled Thomas. "And say, ma, I'm awful hungry."

**Chapter 11****A Man and a Woman**

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ON the same day that the Morning Glory Club was born, it happened that Will Flint met Barbara Wallace on her way to school, and he eagerly grasped the opportunity to renew a friendship which had begun at Barbara's home, in his college town, a year before she came to Manville.

"I'm mighty glad to see you, Miss Wallace," he said, with boyish enthusiasm.

"Thank you," she replied. "And may I ask how you happen to be at home at this time in the year?"

The smile on his face disappeared.

"I'll walk with you a few minutes if you don't mind, and try to explain," he said. Will tried to tell the truth and spare himself at the same time, but did neither well.

"I'm sorry, and in your senior year, too," said Barbara, when he had finished.

"Yes, that's the worst part of the whole affair. I — I don't know why I told you, Miss Wallace, but you asked me, and — you see I don't have any one to tell such things to — never did. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but father has spent



his life trying to save sinners by preaching — somehow it didn't work on me; and mother, she's good, of course, but — I can't say it just the way I want to — I guess it's sympathy I need."

Barbara knew that his earnestness was genuine, but the timidity and hesitancy of the big fellow amused her.

"One can do very little without it," she said, trying to refrain from laughter, and then quickly added: "I suppose that you have already planned for the future."

"No, I haven't decided what I shall do — hardly thought of it, in fact. I shall stay at home for awhile, and then — I don't know — there's nothing I'm fitted for. I suppose that I might saw wood, or work on the roads."

"That would never do for a clergyman's son," replied Barbara.

"Would be rather funny, wouldn't it? Anyway, I've got nothing else to do at present except think about it — I guess something will turn up."

"Wouldn't it be better to find something yourself instead of waiting for it to come to you?"

"I guess you're right, Miss Wallace; but here's your school and forty kids waiting for teacher to

let them in. I won't forget your question. Good-bye." Will raised his cap and walked away.

The children loved Barbara, and usually ran to meet her like a drove of stampeded animals, but on this morning, when they saw her coming accompanied by a stranger, they remained huddled on the steps of the schoolhouse.

"Who's that man?" one of the little girls asked when Barbara arrived within speaking distance.

"Mr. Flint," she replied, with her usual candour.

"Is he a real good man?" piped another. Barbara was not sure, but did not wish to say so. Without making a reply she unlocked the door and went in, followed by her flock, and was soon deep in the morning's work: trying to make the youngsters believe that the earth is round, explaining such perplexing words as pare, pear, and pair, and proving that twelve times twelve makes one hundred and forty-four, — if you do it right.

During the day the question that the little girl had asked, "Is he a real good man?" frequently came into Barbara's mind. She did not know the answer, and wondered why she thought of it at all.

Miss Wallace boarded with Mrs. Tweedie. She was a quiet little woman, but one whose appearance and personality had been, for some

unexplainable reason, the cause of not a little comment among the people of Manville. Her eyes — Mrs. Tweedie thought that blue eyes lacked strength; and her hair did not please Mrs. Doctor Jones because it was neither yellow nor red. According to Mrs. Thornton's standard for feminine contours, her form was "positively dumpy;" and everybody knew that Mrs. Deacon Walton had told Mrs. Undertaker Blake, confidentially, that she "always suspicioned folks that didn't have any more to say about things and people than Miss Wallace did." Many other women were of the same opinion.

On the other hand, the men who knew her thought that she was the right sort; and those who were not acquainted wished that they were. Mr. Tweedie especially was captivated by her quiet manner, and did everything possible for her comfort; and Barbara — perhaps it was because she pitied him — showed in many ways her appreciation of his thoughtfulness. Thomas, the "Tweedie Indian," as he was sometimes appropriately called, declared that "She's the best teacher in town, but when she licks a feller it hurts." Men and women will disagree sometimes — especially about another woman.

There was no real sympathy between Mrs. Tweedie and her boarder, but Barbara was a college graduate, and Mrs. Tweedie had heard that her family was of the best. Education and blood Mrs. Tweedie worshipped. If the devil had presented himself to her with his family history under his arm she would have welcomed him. Besides, taking boarders is a much more genteel way of piecing out an insufficient income than taking in washing.

Fanny Tweedie thought that Barbara was an awfully nice girl; though she was forced to admit after an acquaintance of two years that she did not wholly understand her. And Barbara liked Fanny because, though somewhat frivolous, she was companionable and amusing.

Barbara tolerated Mrs. Tweedie because boarding places in Manville were scarce. She did not care for the town, and disliked especially the manners of most of its people; but she kept her opinions to herself; which, as has been intimated, did not increase her popularity with the women.

Will Flint, son of the Rev. Elijah Flint, was a big, manly-looking fellow who might have been a greater success at college if his parents had not held the reins so tightly when he was a boy at

home. His father had preached him a thousand sermons, and his mother had wept gallons of tears; yet here was the object of their labour at home in disgrace, his career at college ruined in his senior year.

Both said that Will had decided to leave college and engage in some sort of business. He had left, but to say that *he* decided to leave was as far from the truth as right from wrong. The faculty decided, Will left. He was not all to blame, and nothing dishonourable had been done, but his frank explanations did not assuage in the slightest degree the grief of his parents. The disgrace in their eyes was an indelible stain, and a gloom that was deep and black had reigned in the parsonage since the day of his arrival. Outside, tongues were wagging at a furious rate. The sons and daughters of the clergy seem to be the special prey of gossips. They are supposed to be impervious to temptation, something better than the ordinary human. We forget that the same God made them that made the children of the butcher and the baker.

Late that afternoon, after Barbara had sent the last little urchin homeward, she stood at a window looking out over the fields at the autumn

foliage of the woods beyond. She had been there but a moment when Will Flint came down the road and turned into the path that led to the schoolhouse. When he saw her he stopped. Barbara did not know whether she was pleased or not to see him. It was time to go, however, so she put on her things, went out and locked the door, and started down the path.

"Hope you won't be vexed, Miss Wallace, because I came," said Will, "but I've been so confoundedly lonesome to-day that I —"

"I am not vexed," she said, quickly. His manner and frankness pleased her, and dispelled the doubt that was in her mind a moment before.

"I'm glad," he said as they turned and walked toward home. "The boys that I knew," he continued, "have gone away to work, or school. That is why I'm lonesome I suppose, and then the place seems different."

"But it's not," replied Barbara, and a smile played about her lips. He was only a big boy, after all.

"Everything seems to be smaller and shabbier."

"Things," said Barbara, "grow old like men and women."

"Yes, I know, but — I can't seem to say things the way I want to. I've been in the woods all day tramping and thinking; it's done me a lot of good, but — I guess I won't talk about myself any longer."

"But I am interested," said Barbara, earnestly, and then added, quickly, "in anybody who is perplexed."

"Thank you, but at present I'm nobody. I have yet to earn the right to be anybody, much less somebody."

"Very well, if you insist we will drop Mr. Flint."

"I wish that we could drop him out of sight for good," said Will, bitterly.

"What a wicked thought."

"If my thoughts —" Will checked himself suddenly and then asked: "Can't we find something else to talk about? I have it, the new woman's club, have you been invited to join?"

"The *new* woman's club?" said Barbara, feigning surprise. "I had not heard of it."

"You're making fun of me."

"Indeed, it is you who are trying to joke at our expense."

"No, really, Miss Wallace, I meant the woman's

club that mother and the rest are getting up. Are you going to join? ”

“ Yes; do you approve of such things? ”

“ Really, I — I don’t know, and yet I ought to know something about it because father and mother have been debating the question for a week past. Mother is very enthusiastic, but my impression is that father thinks that the club is unnecessary if not really harmful. I shall expect a great boom in Manville society when it gets in running order,” Will replied, and then suddenly burst out laughing.

“ Tell me, please, I want to laugh, too.”

“ Manville society! Doesn’t it strike you as being funny? ”

“ Yes, and no.”

“ A woman’s answer.”

“ Sometimes her only defence.”

“ Pardon me.”

The October sun was disappearing behind the trees toward the west; the night air was stealing up from the lowlands; and a frost-laden wind was coming over the hills.

“ Isn’t the air great? ” said Will after they had walked without speaking for several minutes.

“ Splendid! ” replied Barbara, taking a deep



breath. "The fall is glorious." They had reached Mrs. Tweedie's gate and stopped.

"I want to thank you, Miss Wallace, for —" Will hesitated a moment, "for tolerating me to-day." Then he added, "Good night!" and walked quickly away.

Mrs. Tweedie happened to look out of her parlour window just in time to see Barbara and Will. The sight caused her to shrug her shoulders and wonder.


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**Chapter III**  
**A Male Gossip**

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SAM BILLINGS was Manville's man of all work, and its most garrulous male gossip. At fifty he was a gray, wrinkled bachelor — through no fault of his own, however — living alone on the scanty income that he picked up through the kindness of his tolerant townsmen. Once Sam had been accused of having proposed to every single woman and widow in town, and had refused to deny or affirm the statement. He was still single, however, and as far from matrimony as he ever had been, except once, when through a misunderstanding on Sam's part, he became engaged to a loquacious old maid with whom he had indiscreetly walked home from meeting. But, fortunately for Sam, the lady died just before the date set for the wedding, leaving him free and more talkative than ever before.

On the morning of the day following the organization of the "Morning Glories" Sam went to the home of Mrs. Darling to put on storm-windows. Mrs. Darling was an attractive woman — to look at — but one of the light sort mentally, and much more interested in the affairs of others than her



own. She had been invited to be present at the first meeting of the club, but the arrival of relatives from out of town had prevented her from going. She welcomed Sam cordially, when he came that morning, and invited him to have a cup of coffee before he began work. The morning was cold, the coffee good, and Sam was grateful, and before he had gulped down the last of it Mrs. Darling knew all that was going on in town.

"So Mrs. Browning has a baby at last?" she said as Sam wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Yep."

"Boy, or a girl?"

"One, or t'other, I forget which."

"Really."

"Yep, broke up the meetin' of the club so I heard."

"How dreadfully funny."

"And they say that Ezra Tweedie put his foot in it."

"How was that?"

"Why, he was the one that broke the glad news to the gatherin'."

"Oh. What did you say they named the club?"

"Four-o'clocks, or petunias — somethin' like that, it was the name of a flower anyway, I don't jest remember which."

"And Mrs. Tweedie was chosen president?"

"Yes, I knew she'd be."

"Who was it, did you say, that told you?"

"Well, I stopped in at the grocery on my way over, and then I had a bundle to take to Miss Sawyer's, and — Tommy Tweedie told me the rest. Now I guess I'll start in on the winders if you don't mind. I'm in a little mite of a hurry 'cause I've got to go over to Mis' Walton's this afternoon and give her a coat of paint."

"Very well, you'll find the windows in the attic," said Mrs. Darling, reluctantly. "Oh, you said that you were at Miss Sawyer's this morning, how is she?"

"Lookin' pretty fair," replied Sam with some embarrassment.

"I thought that *you* ought to know."

"Where'd you say them storm-winders was?" Sam asked in an effort to change the subject.

"In the attic. Miss Sawyer would make somebody a good wife."

"I think likely, but —" Sam edged toward the door.

"I've heard, Sam, that you've been going there lately, and that you did not always have a bundle to deliver."

"You're kind of teasin', Mis' Darling, ain't yer?" replied Sam with a grin as he backed out of the room and went up-stairs in search of the storm-windows.

Mrs. Darling was not wholly satisfied with second-hand news, so she ran into Mrs. Thornton's, next door; and, while the baby with a new tooth was having his morning "sample," his mamma related her version of the story of the first meeting of the club.

In order to put on the front chamber windows, it was necessary for Sam to get out on the roof of the piazza. Just as he was climbing out of a window, Alick Purbeck, Mr. Stout's clerk, drove up, and when he saw Sam stopped.

"Hello, Sam," he called, "what you doin' up there?"

"Workin' for my health; doctor says I've got to have three meals a day."

"Doctor nothin'."

"No, Doctor Jones."

"Say, what's this I hear about Billy Flint?"

"Not knowin', I hesitate to say." Mrs.

Darling's coffee had put Sam in a facetious mood.

"There was a man lookin' for him over to the store half an hour ago," said Alick, gravely.

"What d' he have, a bill or a warrant?"

"Dunno."

"I hope Billy ain't in any scrape."

"Same here."

"There ain't nothin' crooked about him."

"That's what I say, but there's lots of folks in town that'll believe anything, 'specially now he's goin' 'round with Miss Wallace some, same's I heard this mornin' he was doin'."

"She's all right, too," said Sam, enthusiastically.

"You bet," replied Alick. "Did you hear about the woman's club?"

"Some."

"What they goin' to do?"

"Well," Sam drawled, "near's I can make out, they're goin' to improve themselves, where there's room for improvement, and scatter blessin's 'round to other folks while they're doin' it. I heard that yesterday they voted ten dollars for a pink tea, and one dollar seventy-five for foreign missions, and —" Sam was interrupted by Mrs.

Stout, who had approached unobserved by either of the gossipers.

"You're lyin', Sam Billin's," she called, sharply. It was evident that she had overheard Sam's remarks.

"Hello, Mis' Stout," called Sam, unabashed, as he peeked over the edge of the roof. "I hear you're a bright and shinin' light in *our* new club."

"Don't you let me hear of you tellin' any more such whoppers, Sam Billin's. Lies breed fast enough in this town without any extra help from you," replied Mrs. Stout, as she looked up at his grinning face, and then turning to Alick, continued, "Ain't you got anything else to do, Alick Purbeck, 'cept sit behind a big cigar and listen to that shiftless critter up there? Go 'long now, or I'll talk your case over with Peter."

Alick drove away, and Sam went to work. Mrs. Stout started on her way, but had gone only a few steps when she met Mrs. Darling returning from Mrs. Thornton's.

"Good morning, Mrs. Stout," she said, "I'm so glad to see you, aren't you out early?"

"Good land! no; I'm goin' over to see your friend Mis' Thornton about her baby. Everybody's s'posed to be foolish over their first baby,

but I guess from what I heard yesterday that she's overdoin' it. She's feedin' him on samples — turns up her nose at cow's milk — and I just made up my mind that she needed a talkin' to whether she wanted it or not."

"No doubt you are right, Mrs. Stout, but —"

"Right, I know I am — such nonsense. Of course you folks that ain't had no children, and don't want any, can't be expected to —" Mrs. Stout stopped suddenly and looked up. Sam was looking and listening with the earnest attention of an incurable gossip.

"Eavesdroppin', are you?" said Mrs. Stout, contemptuously, and then turning to Mrs. Darling added, "Don't you believe one word that scally-wag up there tells you. He gets his news from wash-women and servant girls."

"Well," drawled Sam, "I've noticed that what you hear at back doors is most always nearer the truth than what you hear at the front, though it ain't quite so flatterin'."



**Chapter 10****The "Glories" Meet Again**

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It was Wednesday, and the morning was as bright and beautiful as the flower for which the new club had been named.

Across the road from Mr. Flint's church stood the dingy white parsonage, its windows glistening in the morning sunlight. It was there, and on this particular morning, that the second meeting of the "Glories" was to be held.

Mrs. Flint, with the apprehensiveness of a neat housekeeper, was trotting from one room to another, replacing a chair here, raising or lowering a curtain a fraction of an inch there, and now and then wiping away an imaginary spot of dust.

Will Flint was looking out one of the sitting-room windows, and rocking nervously with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair. He wanted to smoke and read, but smoking was not to be thought of in the parsonage.

"What's going to happen, mother?" he asked, as she came into the sitting-room in search of disorder and dust.

"Our club is to meet here this morning," Mrs. Flint replied, proudly.

"Guess I'll go for a walk," said Will, as he got up, stretched his arms, and yawned.

"I had hoped," sighed Mrs. Flint, regretfully, "that you would stay at home and meet the ladies."

"No, thank you, mother, I guess I'll be safer out-of-doors," he replied, with a laugh.


"Will," said Mrs. Flint, reprovingly.

"I beg your pardon, mother dear, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but — a houseful of women, it's impossible!"

Mrs. Flint suppressed another sigh. Since her son's return from college she could not accustom herself to his ways. She wanted to say, "Willie, be sure and return in time for dinner," but she realized that the boy had become a man, and remained silent.

"I'll be home in time for supper," said Will, as he took his hat and started for the door, then added, "Good luck, mother," and went out.

Mrs. Flint watched from the window, as he walked down the path and up the road, until he disappeared. She was about to turn away from the window when Mrs. Stout waddled into view, stopped in front of the parsonage, hailed Alick



Purbeck, who was driving by, and the following conversation, which Mrs. Flint and all of her neighbours could hear, took place.

"How's your folks, Alick?" asked Mrs. Stout.

"Children ain't well."

"Too bad, what doctor've you got?"

"Jones."

"He don't know nothin'."

"He did my wife a lot of good."

"He don't understand children."

"Well, I've had him twice, and —"

"Take my advice and get another."

"I'll see."

"Has Sam Billin's been tellin' you any more trash about the woman's club?"

"Not a word. Get-ap."

The grocer's wagon rattled off down the street, and Mrs. Stout went to the door and rang the bell. Mrs. Flint was disgusted, but succeeded in concealing her feelings, and greeted Mrs. Stout smilingly.

"You are punctual, Mrs. Stout," she said.

"Yes," puffed Mrs. Stout, "I always make it a point to be on time; it pays and don't cost anything."

"Yes, come right in, punctuality is indeed a

virtue, but one that is unappreciated by those who do not possess it."

"I declare," said Mrs. Stout, as she plumped into a chair, "I do believe I'm gettin' wheezy in my old age, just that little walk from my house has tuckered me out. How's the club gettin' along?"

"Splendidly, over twenty ladies have signified their intention to be present this morning. The committee on rules has completed its work — oh, by the way, you were on that committee, Mrs. Stout. Did you get my postal in regard to the meeting?"

"Yes, but I couldn't come. I'll agree to what you and Miss Sawyer have done, though."

"Very good of you, I'm sure."

"But you can't make women live by rule, any more'n you can mix cats and dogs without there bein' some fightin'." This remark wounded Mrs. Flint's cultured feelings, but before there was time to think of a fitting reply, Mrs. Stout, who was looking out of a window, exclaimed:

"Here's Miss Sawyer! and if she ain't walkin' with that gossipy old bach', Sam Billin's. I thought she was *awful* perticler about the company she kept."

"I dare say their meeting was purely casual," observed Mrs. Flint.

"Most prob'ly," said Mrs. Stout, "but you know how folks will talk."

Mrs. Flint did know, furthermore, she thought, that some folks talked more than others. Their conversation came to an end upon the entrance of Miss Sawyer, and the arrival of several other ladies in rapid succession. Among them was Mrs. Tweedie, who had Mrs. Doctor Jones in tow. Mrs. Jones was a meek little woman with a mind as changeable as a weather-vane, but she was a patient, willing worker, one of the sort always to be found washing dishes after a supper at the church long after her more brilliant sisters had gone home. Mrs. Tweedie always made friends of such women; they were useful, and seldom caused trouble. Another of the new members was Mrs. Deacon Walton, who lived on the edge of the town — "in the country," some of the village ladies said. Mrs. Walton was not sure that membership in a woman's club would be pleasing, proper, or profitable, but was willing to try it.

The ladies were all well acquainted, and immediately began talking in a delightfully happy manner. As the number increased, so did the

chatter, which soon resembled the sounds of a bird store. Mrs. Tweedie, for a long time silent and thoughtful, gazed upon the gathering with pride. Success such as she had never dreamed of was within her grasp. Every woman who had been invited to come was present — wives of the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, all were there, and at the signal for silence stopped talking and looked expectantly at their leader. Mrs. Tweedie looked over the assemblage gravely and leisurely before beginning to speak.

"Ladies of The Morning Glory Club," she began, "the founders of our organization would be indeed ungrateful if they did not appreciate the generous response to their appeal by so many of the first ladies of our town. We thank you, and, I must add, hope that you will concur with us in what has been done at a previous meeting. The records of the last meeting will be read by our secretary."

Miss Sawyer timidly complied with the president's request, reading from a neatly written manuscript of daintily tinted and perfumed note-paper, the sheets of which were fastened together by a pale green ribbon. When Miss Sawyer had finished, the committee on rules presented their

report in the form of a constitution and by-laws, which were accepted without debate. Then Mrs. Tweedie suggested that committees on ethics, art, literature, and the Lord knows what, be appointed. It was done. Everything that Mrs. Tweedie desired came to pass. She was in the clouds; never, even in her dreams, had she thought such power possible.

For an hour the meeting progressed, and during that time Mrs. Stout, for some unfathomable reason, remained silent. When she did rise to speak, she addressed the chair in such a perfectly proper manner that, for a moment, the ladies thought that by some strange process she had become civilized.

“Ladies,” she said, “I’m treasurer of this club, and I’ve been doin’ a lot of thinkin’ since our last meetin’. We’ve got to have some money, and it’ll take for ever and a day for dues at ten cents a month to amount to anything. We’ve got to run some kind of a show to raise money. This ethical and e-comical business is all right, but what we want now is dollars!”

“A very good suggestion,” replied Mrs. Tweedie, who was feeling amiable enough at that moment even to agree with one whom she disliked. The

ladies murmured their approval. "The chair awaits suggestions," continued Mrs. Tweedie. Upon that they, the suggestions, came like an avalanche — everything was proposed from a spelling-match to military whist. But Mrs. Tweedie frowned upon them all; only something new to Manville would suit her. She desired above all things to get as far away as possible from the provincial ways of the town.

"Whatever we give will cost something," remarked Mrs. Darling.

"We can't spend any money if we haven't got any," squeaked the deacon's wife.

"Assuredly not," replied Mrs. Tweedie. "The question is —"

"Why not settle this money business first," interrupted Mrs. Stout. "Mis' Darling says we've got to spend money whatever we do. I say we ain't, what we've got to buy we can get trusted for — everybody else does."

"Very true," said Mrs. Doctor Jones, warmly, "they do, and sometimes for a long time." The wives of the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker looked as though they would like to say "amen." Others moved uneasily, until Mrs. Tweedie came to the rescue.



"The question is," she said, firmly, "what sort of an entertainment shall be given, not how we are to pay for it."

"Madam President," some one said from a corner.

"Mrs. — er — " Mrs. Tweedie craned her neck to see who had spoken. "Oh, Mrs. Thornton."

"What would the ladies say to theatricals?" asked the woman with a baby.

"Good!" exclaimed Fanny Tweedie. "A play, the very thing, what a sweet idea."

"Fanny," said her mother, reprovingly, yet she liked the idea herself.

"A play!" gasped Mrs. Flint, in dismay.

"I am inclined to think favourably of the idea," replied Mrs. Tweedie, turning to the parson's wife.

"But the Church, Mrs. Tweedie, have you forgotten what we owe to our creed?" asked Mrs. Flint, anxiously.

"Oh, no, indeed," said Mrs. Tweedie, with a benevolent smile, "but the barriers between the stage and the Church are not so high as they were."

"They ain't so high," added Mrs. Stout, "but

what most folks can peek over if they stand on tiptoes, and their minister ain't lookin'."

Mrs. Flint felt certain that the end of all things was at hand.

"I'm sure," she said, "I have no idea what Mr. Flint will say."

"What difference would it make?" Mrs. Stout asked, bluntly. This remark was followed by the most embarrassing, painful silence in the history of the club.

When business was resumed, it was voted that a committee of five be appointed to select a play, and plan for its production.

The Reverend and Mrs. Flint had a long talk that night.

"And the unholy suggestion was made and adopted in my home!" thundered the reverend, forgetting that his audience consisted of only one.

Manville was waking up.

**Chapter V**  
**The Stouts at Home**

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THE Stouts were common folks — most of us are, for that matter, in one way or another. Excepting Sundays, Mr. Stout ate his meals with the frock on that he wore at the store; he used his knife at table in a manner not prescribed by etiquette; and at all times his English was at variance with the best authority. But in his dealings with men he was as honest as his wife in her speech, and made money despite customers who did not pay their bills. His three sons were healthy urchins, who obeyed and respected their parents — just like other boys.

“How’s that new club gettin’ along?” Mr. Stout asked his wife while they were at supper on the day of the meeting at the parsonage.

“Fine; I ain’t enjoyed myself for years the way I do at them meetin’s,” replied Mrs. Stout, enthusiastically.

“There won’t be any need of a newspaper here now,” observed her husband without looking up from his plate.

“I expected to hear you say somethin’ like that,” replied Mrs. Stout. “But I want you to

understand just this much, Peter Stout; that club's goin' to be the talk of the town, and do more for it than any crowd of men have ever done so far."

"Won't have to do much," grunted Peter, with his mouth full of beefsteak.

"You're just right about that. This town has got the laziest set of men, outside of their own affairs, that I ever heard of. When they're through work for the day, they just set 'round and smoke, and tell each other that the town ain't the same as it used to be; and that this thing would be done, or that thing 'tended to, if the right men was in office. Who elects the selectmen, I should like to know? And then they talk about who's goin' to be the next President, and who's goin' to be next governor, and let the town that they live in, that's right under their lazy noses day and night, go to rack and ruin. I say the right way is to do *somethin'* even if you make a mess of it tryin'."

"Hear, hear!" cried Peter, as he clapped his hands. "That's a great speech, Emmy, and all true."

"True, I guess it is, true as gospel," replied Mrs. Stout, and then turning on her oldest son

asked, sharply, "Henry Warren Stout, are you eatin' butter on bread, or bread on butter?" Before the boy had time to reply he was hit in the eye with a bread pill from the hand of Paul Jones, whereupon Wendell Phillips fell off his chair convulsed with laughter.

"We're goin' to give a play," said Mrs. Stout, after she had boxed Paul Jones's ears, and the commotion had ceased.

"A play!" Peter put down his knife and fork, masticated and swallowed the food that was in his mouth, and sat staring at his wife in astonishment.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Stout, "and we're all goin' to be in it. It'll be the biggest thing this town ever saw or heard of."

"You, goin' on the stage?" said Peter, with a grin, and then he gave way to hearty laughter.

"I don't see what there is to laugh about, Peter Stout; ain't we got as much right to give a play as anybody?" asked Mrs. Stout, indignantly.

"Yes, it's all right, and if the play is as funny as the idea, it'll make a hit," said Peter, his mirth subsiding.

"It ain't goin' to be funny," retorted Mrs. Stout. "It's goin' to be a classic."

"A classic," he repeated, wonderingly. "What's that?"

"A classic," replied Mrs. Stout, knowingly, "is somethin' you ought to know about, and — and don't."

"Oh," said Peter, still in doubt.

"I hope you're satisfied now."

"I guess so; I'll wait till I've seen the play before I say anything more about it."

"I guess you'd better," said Mrs. Stout, triumphantly. "Paul Jones, take your fingers out of that sauce." Paul Jones obeyed, and licked the sauce from his fingers.

"Ma, is your club goin' to have a ball-nine?" asked Wendell Phillips. He played first base on the Manville Juveniles, which was the only club he knew anything about.

"No, we ain't, Wendell," his mother replied. "Don't you boys get any silly notions about clubs into your heads."

"Ma'd make a bully catcher," suggested Henry Warren.

"Stop your nonsense about baseball or you'll all go to bed," commanded Mrs. Stout, in a tone

that the youngsters could not fail to understand.

The silence that followed was broken by the ringing of the door-bell. The boys jumped from their chairs and started on a race for the door.

"Boys!" said Mrs. Stout, sharply, and the three came to a sudden stop. "Set down." They obeyed, and wistfully watched their mother as she started for the front door.

"Why, Miss Wallace!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout when she opened the door and saw who was there. "Come right in."

"Thank you," replied Miss Wallace, "but I haven't time. I called to ask if Henry was feeling any better."

"Better?" Mrs. Stout did not understand.

"I hope —"

"He ain't any better'n he ought to be, nor any worse'n some other boys I know of," said Mrs. Stout.

"But is he not sick?" asked Miss Wallace.

"Sick? Good land! No; he's eatin' his supper now," replied Mrs. Stout. Miss Wallace sighed, some one had been lying. "Who said he was sick?" asked Mrs. Stout, suspiciously.

“ I understood — ” Miss Wallace began, and then hesitated for a moment. “ He was absent this afternoon,” she continued, “ and I understood Paul and Wendell to say that he was sick.”

“ Absent was he, from school? ” said Mrs. Stout. “ And them two boys lied about it? It won’t happen again, Miss Wallace.” At that moment a man walked past. Mrs. Stout peered into the darkness for a moment, and then called out:

“ Hello, is that you, Willie Flint? ”

“ Yes. Oh, good evening, Mrs. Stout,” replied Will, whom it proved to be, as he turned and retraced his steps.

“ I thought I knew your walk,” said Mrs. Stout. “ Won’t you come in? ”

“ No, thanks.”

“ How’s your mother? ”

“ Nicely, but I must be going, good — ”

“ Don’t you be in such a hurry, Willie Flint,” Mrs. Stout interrupted, and then added, “ This is Miss Wallace here, and I guess you’d better beau her home; it’s a pretty dark night for young women to be runnin’ ’round alone.”

Barbara almost hated Mrs. Stout for saying



that. She had remained silent because, for one reason, there had been no chance for her to speak, and another reason was that she hoped — she did and she did not — that Will would not follow Mrs. Stout's suggestion. Barbara was not unlike other young women in many ways.

"Good evening, Mr. Flint," she said, determined to make the best of it whatever the outcome might be.

"Is that you, Bar— Miss Wallace?" said Will as he came into the yard and up the walk to the steps. Mrs. Stout noticed that he had started to say Barbara.

"I'll 'tend to those boys, Miss Wallace. Good night," she said abruptly, and shut the door.

"Good night," replied Barbara and Will, as they turned and went down the walk together.

"Who was it, ma?" the boys asked in chorus when Mrs. Stout returned to the dining-room, but their mother ignored them.

"Peter Stout," she began in a tone that made him jump, "Henry didn't go to school this afternoon, and Paul and Wendell told Miss Wallace that he was sick."

"What!" exclaimed Peter, turning on his three sons, who sat trembling before him.

"Yes, she came to see if Henry was any better, and that let the cat out of the bag. They've got to be 'tended to," replied Mrs. Stout. "Tended to" in the Stout family meant something painful. The boys looked at each other in dismay, and then at their parents.

"I ain't got time now," said Peter, "but in the mornin' —" With that terrible, unspoken threat on his lips Peter put on his hat, and went back to the store. Mrs. Stout began clearing the table, and the boys silently filed out of the house and sat down on the front door-steps to talk it over.

"You've got to give me back that five cents I give you for sayin' I was sick, Paul," said Henry, "and you too, Wendell."

"I guess not," replied Paul and Wendell, quickly.

"I got found out, didn't I?"

"We said you was sick, didn't we?"

"I'm goin' to get a lickin', ain't I?"

"We're goin' to get one, too, ain't we?"

"I wouldn't lie for money."

"No; you'd get somebody to lie for you," said Wendell, scornfully.

"Yer little brothers," added Paul.



"I wouldn't steal, anyway," retorted Henry. For a moment they were silent.

"Hello, fellers," yelled a boy from the street.

"Hello, Tom," replied the trio.

"Don't make any noise," cautioned Henry as Tommy Tweedie came up to the steps.

"Why?" he asked as he sat down.

"I got caught," said Henry.

Tommy whistled his surprise.

"Did the kids (meaning Paul and Wendell) tell?" he asked.

"Nope; Miss Wallace come to see how sick I was."

"What'd your father say?" snickered Tom.

"Said he'd see us in the mornin'. Say, Tom, what's this club for that your ma and mine are gettin' up?"

"I dunno," replied Tommy, "only I heard pop say we was goin' to have a tablet, kind of a tombstone, you know, in the yard that told on it when the club was foundered or somethin' like that; and this mornin' he told Dora that he wished the tablet was goin' to be put up right away with the date the club died on it, too."

"Are they goin' to play ball?" asked Wendell.

"Women don't play ball," said Paul.

“ My mother says,” replied Tom, “ that women do everything nowadays.”

“ Boys,” said Mrs. Stout, sternly, from the doorway.

The three guilty ones filed solemnly into the house, and Tommy Tweedie slipped away into the darkness.

**Chapter VI****Barbara and Will**

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"GOOD luck is with me sometimes, Barbara," said Will, as they turned into the street from Mrs. Stout's yard.

"Is that a new name for me?" asked Barbara.

"No; but it would be a good one. I meant that I was fortunate in meeting you; chance meetings, you know, are often best."

"Yes," replied Barbara, and then added, "if the chance is genuine." He had met her so often of late by chance, that now, as he was bold enough to speak of it, for a moment she doubted his sincerity.

"Really, Barbara," he replied, quickly, "on honour, I was on my way home, and had no idea where you were." (Except, he might have added, that she was first in his thoughts.) Barbara believed him, nevertheless she was annoyed. Whether her feeling of annoyance was caused by what Mrs. Stout had said, by the chance meeting with Will, or by what people were saying about them, Barbara herself was not sure. She was certain, however, that people were talking and linking her name

with his in a way that she did not like. That very night at supper Mrs. Tweedie had given her estimate of Will Flint's character. The picture that she painted, though more suggestive than real, was intended to be anything except favourable, and Barbara knew that it was intended especially for her. But despite the talk, she liked Will better than any other of her acquaintances in Manville, because he at least was companionable and honest.

"What's going on at the Stouts'?" asked Will. Barbara related the story, and when she had finished Will expressed his feelings with a long whistle.

"The little rascals!" he exclaimed. "I suppose it's all my fault."

"Your fault?" said Barbara, in surprise.

"Yes. Early this afternoon as I was on my way to the pond for an afternoon's fishing I met the Stout boys. Henry asked me where I was going, and when I told him he expressed a wish that he might go too. I said come along, and he did, after a whispered conference with the other two. We had a bully time."

"You great big boy!" exclaimed Barbara, not knowing whether to laugh or be angry. "And

those three boys are going to be punished when you are the one wholly to blame."

"But, Barbara, I never once thought about school, and Henry didn't speak of it."

"Of course he didn't, but now he has got to pay for his fun, and yours, too."

Will stopped and looked back, undecided as to what he ought to do, and very much disturbed to think that he had been the cause of trouble.

"What shall I do, go back and tell Mrs. Stout?" he asked.

"It is all over now, probably."

"That's so," said Will, gloomily, as they resumed their walk. "But I'll go down in the morning and confess everything, and then, some day when there's no school, I'll give those boys a good time to pay for the whipping they've had. The little villains — do you go to see them all when they're sick?"

"Yes, unless some one comes to tell me about them."

That was news to Will. He had thought always that common school teachers' duties consisted of hearing children recite, and the maintaining of discipline in the schoolroom.

"Do you mean to say," he said, in surprise,

“that you think something of, or rather like, every one of those dirty little kids?”

“Like them!” replied Barbara, warmly; “I love them. How could I teach if I did not?”

“I — I didn’t know, I never thought about it before,” he stammered. He had learned something. He had heard her speak the word “love” with feeling, and by it he knew the destiny that he had hoped for, and was humbled. They had reached Mrs. Tweedie’s gate and stopped.

“Barbara,” said Will, “you don’t mind if I walk home with you from the school sometimes, do you?”

“No,” she replied, after a pause. “I am glad to have you — sometimes.”

“And the other times, Barbara?” he asked, and then quickly added, “Pardon me, I have no right to ask; but I may come if not too often?”

“Yes,” replied Barbara, and then went quickly up the walk to the door.

“Good night,” Will called after her, and then slowly walked toward home filled with thoughts of higher ideals, of Barbara, and his new love — for her. What were her thoughts of him? he wondered. Did she ever think of him at all? He knew something of what others were thinking



and saying, but Barbara — He knew that many believed that while away from home he had led a dissolute life, and that he had been expelled from college because of some dishonourable act. Barbara surely had heard these stories about him — they were all lies — but how was she to know? Until then he had not cared what people said, but now — Was he worthy even to try to win her? Thus far in his life he had accomplished nothing. What had he to offer her — not in money or position — but as a man?

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Chapter VII  
Classics and Women

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THE committee on plays was in session at the home of Mrs. Doctor Jones. During the first fifteen minutes of the meeting its members had annihilated the works of the poets and dramatists up to the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

"We really ought to give something from Shakespeare," Mrs. Tweedie was saying.

"What do folks in Manville know about him?" asked Mrs. Stout. "I say we ought to give some-  
thin' they can understand."

"My dear Mrs. Stout," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "that is just the reason why we ought to give something from his works. The people of Manville ought to know something of one of the world's greatest poets. If they do not, it is clearly the duty of the Morning Glory Club to assist in their enlightenment."

"Well, perhaps we can get 'em to come once," retorted Mrs. Stout, "but you can be sure they won't get caught a second time. I think that Shakespeare's too high-toned for folks 'round here, but go ahead if you want to, I've had my say." Mrs. Stout always had her say, and some

of the ladies, particularly Mrs. Tweedie, wished that she did not have it quite so often.

"Of course," said Miss Sawyer, "we could not dream of attempting the production of the whole of one of Shakespeare's plays, but there are many beautiful scenes that we could undertake and be reasonably sure of success."

"That's a good idea; why not give several scenes instead of one play?" suggested Mrs. Jones.

"Good!" exclaimed Fanny Tweedie. "Then we could all have star parts."

"Fanny," rebuked Mrs. Tweedie, "our personal ambition must not be considered, and I sincerely hope that a spirit of self-sacrifice will be manifested, if necessary, when we come to the assignment of parts. Your idea, Mrs. Jones, is to give scenes from different plays?"

"Yes," Mrs. Jones replied; "then if one or more of the scenes were unsuccessful, we could redeem ourselves with the others."

"True," said Mrs. Tweedie, wisely, and then turning to Miss Sawyer, asked: "What scenes would you suggest?"

As Miss Sawyer was considered the best read woman in Manville, she was always the first to be appealed to for advice in regard to such matters,

though her shyness — often mistaken for modesty — made her opinion difficult to obtain.

“During the past week,” she began, “I have been looking over my Shakespeare (Mrs. Tweedie’s suggestion) and have found several scenes that we might consider. I would suggest first the trial scene from the ‘Merchant of Venice,’ and —”

“That would be great!” interrupted Fanny Tweedie. “Mrs. Stout could be the judge — I’d like to play Portia myself — and ma would be a lovely Shylock.”

“Fanny,” said Mrs. Tweedie, severely, “there are others to be consulted in this matter.” She was provoked, not so much by Fanny’s suggestion, as by the titter it caused.

“Why, ma,” Fanny continued, “you know that we talked it over at home, and —” a warning glance from her mother told Fanny that she had said too much, and she suddenly subsided. At a word from Mrs. Tweedie, Miss Sawyer continued:

“There is the balcony scene from ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ and in ‘As You Like It’ there are many beautiful —”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mrs. Jones, “let’s give the scene in the forest where Rosalind, or somebody, hangs valentines on the bushes — it’s lovely.”

"Very beautiful," murmured Miss Sawyer.  
 "And in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' there are many amusing —"

"I didn't know that Shakespeare was funny," blurted Mrs. Stout.

"Not funny," corrected Mrs. Tweedie, "amusing; his wit is of the keenest."

"Same thing, ain't it?" said Mrs. Stout.  
 "Ain't there a play about the taming of somebody?"

"The 'Taming of the Shrew,'" Miss Sawyer responded, quickly.

"That's it. Why wouldn't that be a good play for us?" laughed Mrs. Stout.

"I don't like the name," Mrs. Tweedie replied.  
 "It savours too much of the domineering of the *other sex*."

"Well," said Mrs. Stout, "we might change the name."

"Change the name!" exclaimed the horrified ladies.

"Change the name of one of Shakespeare's plays!" groaned Miss Sawyer.

"What name, may I ask," said Mrs. Tweedie, majestically, "would you substitute?"

Mrs. Stout was thoroughly enjoying the dis-

comfiture that she had caused, and was laughing in a most provoking manner.

"We might call it the 'Un-taming of the Shrews,'" she replied, and then added: "See here, I don't see any terrible harm in changin' the name of anything. You changed yours, Mis' Tweedie, didn't you?"

"No," snapped Mrs. Tweedie, "I added a name to the one I already had." Mrs. Tweedie always wrote her name Aurelia Scraggs Tweedie. (Scraggs was a famous actor — three times removed — the moves, hasty ones, being from Providence Plantation to Boston, from Boston to Salem, and from there to Portsmouth, with the king's officers close upon his heels at every step.)

"Oh, excuse *me*," said Mrs. Stout, with exaggerated politeness, "but the rest of us did change our names when we was married."

"Mrs. Stout," replied Mrs. Tweedie, as she glared at the promoter of the disturbance, "the business before us is not of a humourous nature."

"Good land!" retorted Mrs. Stout. "If we've got to wear funeral faces every time we get together we'd better bust up now."

"Humour and wit," said Mrs. Tweedie, icily, "have their place, but the changing of the name

of a classic would be sacrilege." For the time being Mrs. Stout had had enough fun, and permitted Mrs. Tweedie to have the last word.

"Has any one thought of the old comedies, so-called, of Sheridan and Goldsmith?" asked Mrs. Jones. "There's 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and —"

"That would never do," said Mrs. Stout, breaking forth again; "we wouldn't 'stoop to conquer,' not even for a classic," and for once Mrs. Tweedie agreed with her.

"The title certainly is not appropriate for a woman's club," she remarked, decidedly.

"The 'School for Scandal' is a famous play," Miss Sawyer ventured to suggest, but the only approval her suggestion received was another outburst of laughter from Mrs. Stout.

"If we should give that play," she gurgled, "we'd be sure to make a hit, it would be so natural."

Fortunately for the future welfare of the Morning Glory Club the telephone bell rang at that moment, and Mrs. Jones hastened to answer its summons.

The telephone was in the hall, only a step or two from the room in which the ladies were sitting,

and as Mrs. Jones went out she left the door ajar. Silence fell over the group — not because that they wished to hear, of course, but in order that Mrs. Jones might not be annoyed. A message to a doctor's home might be *so* important, you know.

“Diphtheria?” they heard her say. “Where? — At school — The Clark children? — What? — Oh, Miss who? — Miss Wallace? — Sent the children home? — Yes. — Will you be home to lunch? — What? — Will there be any? — *Of course* — Good-bye.”

“Diphtheria!” exclaimed the ladies when they were sure that Mrs. Jones was through, and a look of anxiety spread over the faces of those who had children.

“Did you hear?” asked Mrs. Jones, as she reëntered the room. “Miss Wallace suspected that one of the Clark girls had diphtheria, so she sent both of them home. The doctor is at the Clarks’ now, and says that Miss Wallace was right, and that the school will have to be closed.”

“Goodness!” exclaimed Mrs. Stout, “just think of havin’ them three boys of mine runnin’ wild for three or four weeks, to say nothin’ of the danger of their bein’ sick.”



"What we have heard is very distressing," said Mrs. Tweedie, "but let us not be unnerved until we learn all of the particulars. In the meantime would it not be wise to continue with our work? Miss Sawyer, are you familiar with Ibsen's plays?" Thus did Mrs. Tweedie throw off diphtheria for Ibsen.

"I have read 'A Doll's House,'" replied Miss Sawyer, blushing.

"'A Doll's House,'" queried Mrs. Stout, "is it a play for children?"

"By no means," snapped Mrs. Tweedie.

"Oh, ma!" Fanny exclaimed, "I don't know anything about Ibsen, but do you remember 'The Lady of Lyons?' We saw it in Boston. It was about the loveliest girl — a princess — who married a labourer's son disguised as a prince, and when she found it out he went into the army, and then came home as a general or something, and they made up."

"Yes, I remember," replied Mrs. Tweedie. "Let me see, who wrote it?"

"Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer," said Miss Sawyer, promptly. "It's a beautiful play containing some of the sweetest love-scenes imaginable."

"Has it got anything to do with a circus?"

asked Mrs. Stout, innocently, having in mind, no doubt, the lady in a cage of lions with the "Ding-a-ling Circus," that came to Manville every year.

"Circus, indeed not!" said Mrs. Jones. "Lyons is the name of a city in France."

"Oh," was all that Mrs. Stout had to say in reply. She was gaining knowledge rapidly, and realized it. Only the night before she had said to her husband that "if the club don't go up I expect to know somethin' sometime."

Formal suggestions and discussion gave way to general chatting. They were not getting ahead at all, and Mrs. Tweedie became annoyed. As she sat watching them, a new and alarming thought came suddenly into her mind, and a look of consternation spread over her face.

"Ladies!" she exclaimed, in a choking voice, "it has just occurred to me that in every play that has been suggested there are MALE CHARACTERS!" The silence that followed Mrs. Tweedie's statement was cruelly disheartening. What a horrible thought, such a dejected-looking gathering of women was never seen before.

"Is it possible!" gasped Mrs. Jones, who was the first to recover from the shock. "Is it possible that in every classic there is a man?"

"Men wrote most of 'em, didn't they?" asked Mrs. Stout.

Mrs. Tweedie's eyes snapped angrily.

"That is not a fair question," she said. "What if they did write the classics? Doubtless you can guess why."

"Most prob'ly," replied Mrs. Stout, in a tone that was meek for her, "it was because the women folks had to spend their time washin' dishes and 'tendin' babies, and didn't have time even to try."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Tweedie.

"*Was* there a Mis' Shakespeare?" queried Mrs. Stout. No one seemed to know.

"Well," said Mrs. Jones, "if we can't find a play without a man in it, what shall we do?"

"Play the part of men ourselves," replied Fanny Tweedie, boldly.

"Fanny!" exclaimed her mother.

"A good idea," said Mrs. Stout. "I guess that most of us women know enough about men to make believe."

"That's so," added Mrs. Jones, "such things have been done, I don't see what harm it would do."

"But the costuming," said Mrs. Tweedie, "how would that be arranged?"

"Put a sign, 'this is a man,' on the ones that have men's parts," suggested Mrs. Stout. A ring at the door quickly stopped the titter caused by Mrs. Stout's suggestion. Mrs. Jones excused herself and left the room. Again perfect silence reigned.

"Mother wants the doctor right off," they heard a boy say. "The baby's broke out all over."

"I'll tell him just as soon as he returns," replied Mrs. Jones.

"Measles," said Mrs. Stout in a loud whisper, "what a time we are havin'."

"It was Sammy Dobbins," explained Mrs. Jones, when she returned. "That's the way I have to run all day; first the telephone, and then the door-bell."

"It must be very trying," said Mrs. Tweedie, sympathetically.

"Here it is, here it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, explosively, as she waved a book that she had taken from a table a moment before. "Listen: 'Vanity Fair, a Novel without a Hero,'" she read. "Ain't there a play by that name?"

"Nonsense," sniffed Mrs. Tweedie. "It's full of men, and such men —"

“And a woman,” added Mrs. Jones.

“Such a woman,” said Miss Sawyer. Mrs. Stout closed the book, and replaced it. She was squelched.

“We are getting on very slowly,” sighed Mrs. Tweedie. “Let me suggest a programme.” No one objected. “What would you say to the trial scene from the ‘Merchant of Venice,’ the balcony scene from ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ a scene from the ‘Lady of Lyons,’ and a one-act play written by our Miss Sawyer, entitled ‘Yellow Roses’?”

There was much to be said, and the discussion began anew, but Mrs. Tweedie was determined to win, and win she did.

“The smell of medicine in a doctor’s house,” remarked Mrs. Stout, as she walked toward home with Mrs. Thornton, “always makes me feel as though my last day had come.”

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**Chapter VIII**  
**A Woman's Way**

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BARBARA WALLACE never forgot the morning on which she discovered that one of her pupils was threatened with diphtheria. The child affected, and her sister, were sent home, and Tommy Tweedie was sent for Mr. George, the chairman of the school committee. While awaiting his arrival, Barbara went on with the morning's work, but with less interest than usual, and a heavy heart.

An hour and a half dragged by before Mr. George came. On the way he had met Doctor Jones, who had seen the sick child, and confirmed Barbara's suspicions. That morning he had discovered three cases himself. Conditions were considered serious, and Mr. George decided that the school should be closed for at least two weeks, and instructed Barbara to inform the children before they were dismissed at noon. When she made the announcement, the thoughtless young Americans wiggled like tadpoles at the prospect of a two weeks' vacation, and danced and shouted for joy the moment they were out-of-doors. Barbara watched them from the doorway as they ran

off, and when the thought came to her that some of them might never return, the tears sprang to her eyes. When the children had disappeared she went back to her desk, for a moment looked over the shabby little room and the rows of empty seats, then buried her head in her arms and sobbed like a child.

"Miss Wallace," she heard some one say in a child's sweet voice.

Barbara looked up and saw Bessie Duncan, one of her flock, standing in the doorway with a bunch of autumn leaves in her hand. Bessie belonged to one of the poorest, dirtiest families in Manville; she herself, however, was a diamond, though a dirty one, and Barbara loved her.

"Why, Bessie," said Barbara, wiping her eyes, "did you forget something?"

"No, um, I — why ain't we goin' to have school any more?"

"Because some of the children are sick, and we don't want any of the others to be."

"Ain't we ever goin' to have any more school?" Bessie asked, as she walked slowly toward Barbara.

"Oh, yes, when the children are well again."

The child was silent for a moment, then she smiled, and gave Barbara the bunch of leaves.

"There ain't any flowers now," she said, "so I got these for you."

"Thank you, Bessie, you were very kind to think of me. Aren't they pretty?"

"Yes, um, I picked 'em all by myself in the woods. What makes the leaves fall off?"

"Because winter is coming."

"Miss Wallace," said the child after a pause, "I hope you ain't goin' to be sick and die."

Barbara took the little one in her arms, and kissed her dirty little cheek.

"No, Bessie, I hope not."

"I like you, Miss Wallace."

"I am very glad that you do."

"Does that big man like you, too?" Bessie innocently asked, and then wondered why her teacher's face grew pink. Before Barbara had time to reply she heard a heavy step, and looking up saw Will Flint, the "big man," standing in the doorway and smiling at what he thought was a pretty picture.

"Don't come in," said Barbara, in alarm.

"Why, Barbara, what—" he began as he walked toward her.

"Don't, please — Will," pleaded Barbara.  
"Please go outside, and then I will explain."



Will backed slowly out of the door, wondering what had happened to cause Barbara to speak and act so strangely. When he had closed the door Barbara put Bessie down, and went to an open window. Will felt relieved when he looked up and saw her smiling.

"We discovered diphtheria among the children to-day, and I didn't want you to be exposed," she explained.

"How about yourself?" he asked, bluntly.

"Why, I have got to take my chances with the children."

"Rather dangerous, isn't it?"

"I — I suppose so; the school is to be closed for two weeks."

Will did not like that, he would miss the walks that he had been enjoying with her.

"Are you going home soon?" he asked.

"Yes, but you must not go with me to-day."

"I'm not afraid," said Will, quickly.

"But I am — for you," she replied. The tiniest bit of hesitation before the "for you" made Will happy, but he made no reply. Perhaps it was the time, or place, or the big blue eyes of Bessie Duncan peering at him over the window-

sill, that restrained him from speaking the words that trembled on his lips.

"Good-bye," was all he said, as he turned quickly and strode away. In place of the sun and sky, the woods and fields, he saw her face. He did not hear the chatter of the crows, or the sighing of the wind; only her voice could he hear saying, "Will," and "for you."

Barbara and Bessie watched until he disappeared around a bend in the road.

"Is he a good man?" Bessie asked as she took Barbara's hand, and looked up at her earnestly. It was she who had asked that same question before. The first time Barbara had evaded an answer, but now she replied quickly, and with a flood of meaning:

"Yes."

**Chapter IX**  
**Men Talk Too**

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"STOUT'S Grocery," as the sign over the door read, was the scene — especially on rainy evenings — of many heated debates and windy harangues on topics as varied as New England weather. There was decided the policies of the great political parties; the characters of great or notorious men were weighed and analyzed; the worth, financial, mental, and moral, of the citizens of Manville — not present — were frankly estimated; and, alas, sometimes, the virtues and vices of women received the attention of the gathering of do-little busybodies.

It was raining. The prophecy had appeared in the evening paper, and it had come to pass that the prophecy and the elements were working harmoniously. Only a few brief words were devoted to it by those who had gathered at the store on this particular evening. Incense, in kind, was ascending in clouds to one of man's greatest gods — tobacco.

"How's that woman's club gettin' 'long?" Sam Billings asked without addressing any one in particular.

"I hear," replied Mr. Blake, the undertaker, "that they're doing first-rate. My wife has joined."

"You 'n' your wife are gettin' to be reg'lar jiners, ain't yer? B'long to 'most everything now," remarked Sam.

"Well, we like to keep in touch with what's going on in the world," replied Mr. Blake, modestly.

"Business is business," chuckled Sam. Mr. Blake made no reply to the insinuation. "What do they want a club for, anyway?" Sam continued. "Don't they have enough to do without gettin' together and stirrin' things up?"

"Perhaps it's because they want a change," suggested Alick Purbeck.

"Change?" sniffed Sam, scornfully. "What change do any of us get? We get up in the morning every day at the same time, eat our breakfast, go to work, eat our dinner, go to work, eat our supper, and — sometimes we come down here and swap lies, and —"

"There's your change," interrupted Mr. Blake. "At our work most of us men meet different people, we see new faces and new things, but the women stay at home, wash, sew, cook, care for

the children, and never know when the day is done unless they look at the clock — then they're not always sure."

"There ain't any use tryin' to argue with you," replied Sam. "What are they goin' to do at this club that'll give 'em a change?"

"Well," said Mr. Blake, "I understand that they're going to give a play, study art, science, and so forth, and give social affairs that will bring the people together in a way that will benefit us all."

"Ump! I'd like to know how they'll do *me* any good," grunted Sam.

"Well," smiled Mr. Blake, "I can't think of anything at this moment that they could do to make you any better or worse, but when women set out to do anything I've noticed that they generally get there."

"You're right about that," said Sam, wagging his head, "they are persistent critters."

"Perhaps if you were married you'd have more respect for women," added Mr. Blake.

"Maybe his weddin' ain't so very far off," said Alick Purbeck. "I've seen him in comp'ny with the same lady three times within a week."

"Jest happened so," retorted Sam.

"Gettin' married jest happens sometimes," replied Alick.

"When a woman ketches me," said Sam, boastfully, "she's got to be mighty fetchin' in more ways 'n one."

"If there's any catching to be done, I guess you'll have to do it," commented Mr. Blake.

Sam felt that he was getting the worst of the argument, and changed the subject.

"What kind of a show are they goin' to give?" he asked.

"Scenes from the classics," replied Mr. Blake.

"Is it a good play?" Sam innocently inquired. Mr. Blake began to explain, but before he had finished the door was opened and Ezra Tweedie came in.

"Evenin', Ezra," said Peter Stout, from his seat on the counter.

"Good evening, gentlemen," replied Ezra, with a queer little nod, and then giving Peter a slip of paper, added, "Kindly put up those things for me, Mr. Stout."

"Certain," said Peter, as he slid off the counter.

While waiting for his order to be put up, Ezra sat down with the group of tobacco slaves. Ezra did not smoke himself, his health would not

permit it, so he said, but everybody knew that the disapproval of Aurelia Scraggs Tweedie was all that kept him from the use of the seductive narcotic. He liked *to be smoked*, however, and was always delighted when his wife sent him to the store in the evening. And the men, the smokers, liked Ezra — and pitied him.

“How’s things with you, Ezra?” asked Sam when Ezra was comfortably seated.

“About the same, thank you,” Ezra cheerfully replied.

“Here’s the man,” Sam went on, “that can tell us all about the woman’s club, can’t you, Ezra?”

“Well,” Ezra began, with a cough and a smile, “I cannot say that I know all about it, but naturally I do know something, perhaps a little more than any other of *our sex*.” “*Our sex*” was the offspring of his wife’s favourite term, the “*other sex*.” Ezra was so seldom the centre of interest, or the source of information, that the position which he held at that moment pleased him immensely.

“Your wife has been chosen president, I believe,” said Mr. Blake.

“Yes,” replied Ezra, proudly, “and she was

the one who conceived the idea, the founder, one could justly say."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Sam.

Ezra smiled a broader smile as he looked at the interested, open-mouthed men about him. Very likely he thought that the next best thing to being a man himself was to have a manly wife.

"What did you say?" Ezra asked, turning toward Peter, who had spoken from the depths of a sugar-barrel.

"Green tea, or black?" said Peter as he withdrew his head and shoulders from the barrel, his face very red.

"Oh, green and black mixed, please," replied Ezra, and then picking up the thread of the conversation where he had dropped it continued: "Yes, Mrs. Tweedie founded the club, and is now its president. I feel confident that it is going to be a grand thing for our town."

"How's that?" Sam asked, hoping to "set Ezra a-goin'," as he would have expressed it.

"How?" repeated Ezra. "By lifting us out of the mire of ignorance, by encouraging social intercourse, in fact, by broadening us in every way."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Sam.



"Yes, sir, I do mean it." Ezra did mean it at the time he spoke, notwithstanding sentiments that he had previously expressed to the contrary.

"What'd I tell you, Sam?" said Alick, vauntingly, and turning to Ezra, added: "Sam, here, Mr. Tweedie, has been runnin' women folks down, and we told him it was because he wasn't married."

"And you were right, Alick; a man who is unmarried is not competent to judge women," Ezra replied.

"And a man that *is* married don't dare to," retorted Sam.

The entrance of Doctor Jones at that moment saved Sam from a severe tongue-lashing from the married men present.

The doctor was a jolly, generous soul who did twice as much work as he was paid for, and was loved and hated after the manner of all general practitioners of medicine. There were people in Manville who declared that Doctor Jones could work miracles, while others said that he was a butcher and a murderer; but men who have the courage to fight disease and death are not often disturbed or injured by the wagging of mischievous tongues.

"Well," said the doctor, as he sat down, "who is catching it to-night?"

"The woman's club," Sam promptly replied.

"The town is more stirred up over that club than it ever was about anything before," laughed the doctor.

"Now, seein' we've got the question before us," said Sam, "s'pose you give us your opinion."

"Oh, the club is all right, I guess," replied the doctor.

"There, Sam," said Alick, "I guess you're the only woman-hater in the crowd."

"I ain't no woman-hater," replied Sam, indignantly.

"No," Alick laughed, "but you try to make us think you are."

"No such thing; all I want to know is, what's this woman's club for, and how's it goin' to help Manville?"

"Well," drawled Alick, "it's *for* the women, and it's goin' to help Manville by showin' *you* what an ignorant cuss *you* be."

Sam threw a potato at his tormentor, but Alick dodged, and the missile knocked off Ezra Tweedie's hat.

"No offence, Mr. Tweedie," said Alick, quickly, "strictly unintentional."

"No harm, no harm," replied Ezra, as he got up and put on his hat; "but I guess it is time for me to go if my things are ready, Mr. Stout."

Peter handed Ezra his basket, and then whispered something in his ear. "Certainly, certainly," said Ezra, "it shall be attended to the first of the week." And then turning to the others wished them, "Good evening, gentlemen," walked quickly to the door, and went out.

"Ain't he the queerest little man you ever see?" observed Sam, when Ezra had gone.

"Queer!" replied Alick, "he ain't any queerer in his way than you are in yours."

"Well, I dunno; he's a little too womanish to suit me," said Sam.

"If you had a streak of it in you perhaps you'd show off better." Just then the door was opened, and Barbara Wallace came in and started toward the group of men, hesitated for a moment, and then stopped. The men took the pipes from their mouths and stared at the woman in dripping garments. She was evidently in great distress and looking for some one, but the tobacco smoke was so thick, and the light so dim, that it was

difficult for her to distinguish the faces of the men present. Doctor Jones got up and went toward her.

"Are you looking for some one, Miss Wallace?" he asked.

"Yes, doctor, I wanted you, and I hoped" — her voice trembled — "I hoped to find Mr. Blake here, too." When the undertaker heard his name he joined them.

"Who is it?" asked the doctor, anxiously. He had thought that his patients were in no danger, at least for the night. Tears came to Barbara's eyes.

"Bessie Duncan," she replied.

"Are you sure that she is —" the doctor hesitated.

"Yes, but you'll go, doctor, and you, too, won't you, Mr. Blake?" Barbara pleaded. The expression on the undertaker's face was not encouraging. "I know about the others," she continued, "but they have had such a hard time, please go — for me, Mr. Blake. I'll — I — you can come to me for the money."

"I'll go," said Mr. Blake; "never mind about the money."

"Come," was all that Barbara said as she

started for the door followed by the two men. The three went out into the rain and the darkness of the night on their cheerless errand.

The talkers at the store were silent for a long time after that. They had heard all that was said, though it was far from Barbara's intention that they should, but she had been so eager to secure the assistance of the doctor and Mr. Blake that she had thought only of them.

"So Miss Wallace wants to pay the bills of that mean, drunken skunk of a Rufe Duncan," said Sam, fiercely.

"That ain't any of your business," retorted Alick. "If she wants to have the little girl buried decent, what's the harm?"

"'Tain't her place," replied Sam, more for the sake of an argument than because he believed it. "What do you say, Peter?"

"I say," Peter began, slowly, "I've heard about angels with wings, but the only kind I've ever seen is just such little women as Miss Wallace is."

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**Chapter 8**  
**A Rehearsal**

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SCENE 1, Act IV., of the "Merchant of Venice" was on for rehearsal and mutilation at the home of Mrs. Tweedie by a cast whose performance assured a treat for the people of Manville.

Early that morning Mrs. Tweedie, having in mind the domestic friction which had been displayed at the first meeting of the club, and desiring to prevent the possibility of its recurrence, had sent her husband on a long errand, given Dora permission to visit a cousin, and urged Tommy to spend the day in the woods.

When the hour appointed for the rehearsal came, Miss Sawyer — at a previous meeting appointed stage-directress — was bustling about arranging chairs and table in an effort to make Mrs. Tweedie's parlour resemble a court of justice in Venice. When she had completed her work, the room looked as though house-cleaning was in progress. While this was being done, the ladies who had parts in the scene huddled in the front hall, and chatted in subdued tones. Anticipatory fear was already hovering over them.

"I am ready, ladies," announced Miss Sawyer.

The hearts of the amateur actresses beat faster as they entered the parlour and gazed upon the arrangement of the furniture.

"That," Miss Sawyer began to explain as she pointed to a large chair flanked on each side by two smaller ones, "is where the Duke and Magnificoes sit, and these chairs and tables down here and those on either side are to be used by the other characters." If the scene was set and played as arranged by Miss Sawyer it would resemble a minstrel circle with the Duke as interlocutor, and Shylock and Antonio for "bones" and "tambo."

"Where do we come in?" asked Mrs. Jones, timidly.

"When you've got something to say," said Mrs. Stout, before Miss Sawyer had time to reply.

"We will only use one entrance," explained Miss Sawyer, when the laugh that Mrs. Stout caused had subsided. "It will be much easier to remember, and accordingly will prevent confusion. And that," she said, waving her hand toward one side of the room, "is where the audience is supposed to be. Now if the cast will please step back into the hall we will begin."

The "cast" solemnly filed from the room, and

Miss Sawyer, book in hand, took up a position in the centre of the stage.

“ ‘ Enter the Duke, the Magnificoes, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Salerio, and others,’ ” she read.

“ Who’s goin’ to be the ‘ others ’ ? ” called Mrs. Stout. Miss Sawyer made no reply, and the rest did not laugh because each of them, excepting Mrs. Tweedie and Mrs. Stout, when the name of the character she was to play was read, had a nervous chill. Miss Sawyer waited patiently for some one to enter, but no one stirred.

“ Who goes in first ? ” asked Mrs. Blake.

“ The Duke,” replied Miss Sawyer.

“ Goodness ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Stout. “ Have I got to be the first one ? ”

“ Certainly ; come right in and act as naturally as you can,” said Miss Sawyer, with a patronizing air of encouragement.

Mrs. Stout entered, followed by her “ soot,” as she called it, and stood staring at the open book before her — dumb.

“ Well ? ” Miss Sawyer looked up inquiringly.

“ Shall I say what I’ve got to now ? ” asked Mrs. Stout.

“ Yes, but face the audience first.” Strange



to relate, Mrs. Stout seemed to be confused. She turned, but the wrong way. "No, no," Miss Sawyer corrected, nervously, "this way."

"Oh," said Mrs. Stout, as she faced in the right direction and began to read.

"It's your turn, Mrs. Blake," prompted Miss Sawyer, when Mrs. Stout had read her first line. (One would have thought that they were playing croquet.)

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, all in a flutter, "is it?" and then when she had found the place, read, "'Ready, so please your grace.'"

And so the rehearsal of the famous scene hitched along until the approach of Shylock was announced. Mrs. Tweedie, who was to play the part, was ready, and entered at precisely the right moment with her accustomed assurance. And when Mrs. Stout had waded and stumbled through the long speech of the Duke to Shylock, Mrs. Tweedie, scorning to look at her book, began her lines. She had seen a famous actor play the part, and tried to imitate him, but failed horribly.

Harmony prevailed until Mrs. Jones balked at a word in the text that a lady of the Morning Glory Club would not use — outside of her family circle.

"I cannot, will not, use such a word!" she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes.

"But, my dear Mrs. Jones," entreated Mrs. Tweedie, "this is the work of Shakespeare, a classic."

"Umph!" grunted Mrs. Stout, who had discovered the word in question. "If such words are all right here, then our men folks are quoting the classics and the Bible most of the time."

"My dear ladies," interposed Miss Sawyer, "you do not seem to understand the sense in which the word is used; your view-point is incorrect."

"Well," said Mrs. Stout, "I know that when my husband quotes the classics folks most always see the point."

"Oh, bother!" interrupted Fanny Tweedie. "Let's skip the naughty words; I'm just dying to have this rehearsal over with."

"Fanny," reproved Mrs. Tweedie. "Do proceed, Mrs. Jones, I am sure that as we go on we will find a way out of the difficulty."

Mrs. Jones went on with her part, mouthing her lines meaninglessly.

"'The quality of Mercy is not strain'd —'" read Fanny Tweedie, in a strained voice.

Mrs. Stout interrupted her by innocently observing: "I wonder why Shakespeare used so many old sayin's."

Mrs. Tweedie and Miss Sawyer turned pale; Fanny Tweedie giggled unreprieved, and then another of those painful silences prevailed.

"Mrs. Stout," said Mrs. Tweedie, when she could control herself, "*we* have been quoting Shakespeare for over three hundred years; *he* never quoted anybody."

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout; then she laughingly added: "Perhaps you and Miss Sawyer have been quotin' him for three hundred years, but I'm mighty sure that I ain't."

"When I said *we* I meant the world," replied Mrs. Tweedie, haughtily.

"Oh," said Mrs. Stout, and the incident was closed.

"What an unfeeling wretch that Shylock was," observed Mrs. Blake, after the rehearsal had continued without interruption for several minutes. "It makes me shudder to think of such a man. How are you going to dress for the part, Mrs. Tweedie?"

"I shall endeavour to dress appropriately, and as becomes my sex," replied Mrs. Tweedie.

"Ladies, let us not waste valuable time talking dress," said Miss Sawyer, impatiently.

"What's the harm, I'd like to know; who's got a better right to talk about dress than us women?" asked Mrs. Stout, pertly.

"But is the subject appropriate at this time?" retorted Miss Sawyer.

"It's always appropriate," replied Mrs. Stout. "A woman can't be happy unless she's well dressed, or thinks she is, any more'n a man can be good-natured on an empty stomach."

"Which proves the inferiority of the *other sex*," said Mrs. Tweedie.

"Ump! I don't know about that," replied Mrs. Stout. "We make just as big fools of ourselves about dressin' as the men do about eatin' and drinkin'."

"Indeed, and is it not commendable to appear as well as one can?" queried Mrs. Tweedie.

"That's all right," retorted Mrs. Stout, "if it ended there, but it don't. Most women folks would wear a smile, a pink ribbon, and rings on their toes if the fashion papers said it was proper, and then wonder why the men stared at 'em."

"Because some women err in such matters,

are we — ” remonstrated Mrs. Jones, mildly, but Fanny interrupted her.

“ Oh,” she exclaimed, in her explosive manner, “ I’m in the greatest luck ! Miss Wallace is going to let me take her graduation cap and gown. I’ve tried them on and the effect is just killing.”

“ You are very fortunate, and how is Miss Wallace ? ” asked Mrs. Blake.

“ Tired out,” replied Fanny, “ running around calling on sick children.”

“ I have heard,” said Mrs. Darling, “ that Miss Wallace spent an evening at the store a few days ago.”

“ There ain’t a word of truth in it ! ” hotly replied Mrs. Stout. “ She went there just for a minute to get Doctor Jones and Mr. Blake the night little Bessie Duncan died. The way such lies travel beats automobiles.”

“ Oh, of course, I didn’t believe it for one moment,” simpered Mrs. Darling, “ and I wouldn’t say a word to injure her for worlds — she’s such a *lovely* girl.”

“ Girl,” said Mrs. Thornton, “ she’s every day of twenty-five.”

“ Why ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Blake, “ I wouldn’t have believed it.”

"Well," drawled Mrs. Stout, "it's a long time since any of us, 'ceptin' Fanny, was that age."

"Mrs. Stout will speak the truth at all times," remarked Mrs. Tweedie, sarcastically.

"Somebody's got to tell it," retorted Mrs. Stout.

"Pardon me, ladies," said Miss Sawyer, "but we have drifted away from the work of the great poet."

"Poet!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout. "Was Shakespeare a poet?"

"Certainly," replied Miss Sawyer, impatiently.

"And is this play poetry?"

"Yes, much of it."

"Well!" Mrs. Stout's astonishment equalled her ignorance.

"Do you object greatly to poetry?" asked Mrs. Tweedie.

"Oh, no," replied Mrs. Stout, "poetry is good, like angel-cake, but you can't live on it."

The laugh that followed cleared the atmosphere, and the rehearsal continued. As it progressed the ladies gained courage, and declaimed their lines in what they thought was a professional manner. Miss Sawyer was pleased and beamed on them encouragingly, suggesting now and then a gesture, inflection, or "business," but, despite her efforts

to keep them constantly on the dramatic road, digressions were frequent.

"I wonder if Miss Wallace cares anything about Will Flint," said Mrs. Thornton to Mrs. Darling, when they were alone in a corner of the hall waiting their "turn."

"I am sure that *I* don't know, but I have heard that he was very fond of her, and that he walks to and from school with her almost every day."

"Really! and hasn't he anything else to do?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Of course you know that there are mysterious, disagreeable stories about him, and that for a minister's son he is — er — well —"

"I understand perfectly."

"'There's a skeleton —' you know the saying, and —" Just then the gossipers heard the rustle of skirts in the hall above, followed by the sound of a door being closed. They looked at each other in dismay.

"Do you suppose?" gasped Mrs. Darling, in alarm.

"I'll find out," replied Mrs. Thornton, as she went to the parlour door and beckoned to Fanny Tweedie.

"What do you want?" asked Fanny, as she came into the hall.

"Sh! Is — er — Miss Wallace at home?" whispered Mrs. Darling.

"Yes," Fanny replied. "Why?"

"Oh!" gasped the culprits.

"What *will* she think of us?" groaned Mrs. Darling.

"What are you folks whisperin' about?" asked Mrs. Stout at that moment as she came out into the hall and joined them. Fanny laughed, she had guessed the cause of Mrs. Darling's and Mrs. Thornton's discomfiture, and enjoyed the situation.

"Well," whispered Mrs. Thornton in reply to Mrs. Stout's question, "we, Dolly and I, were talking out here, and we happened to mention — we spoke of Will Flint and Miss Wallace, and we think that perhaps she —"

"Heard," interrupted Mrs. Darling.

"Good 'nough for you," said Mrs. Stout.

"Sh! But we didn't say a word that she could object to," continued Mrs. Thornton.

"At least about her," added Mrs. Darling.

"But," said Mrs. Stout, "you did say something about Willie Flint that —"



“Hush!” exclaimed the guilty ones.

“I thought so,” said Mrs. Stout, lowering her voice. “But let me tell you that I believe that Willie Flint ain’t half as bad as some folks try to make him out to be, and as for he and Miss Wallace — ”

“It is your turn, Mrs. Darling,” called Miss Sawyer from the parlour. The whisperers returned to their work, but in the minds of two of them were many misgivings.

“Serves her right,” whispered Mrs. Darling to Mrs. Thornton at the first opportunity.

“Indeed it does,” was her friend’s reply.

The aspirants for histrionic laurels rehearsed the scene twice, and then sat down to talk it over.

“What I can’t understand,” said Mrs. Blake, “is why Bassanio and Gratiano didn’t know Portia and Nerissa, with whom they were in love.”

“Portia and Nerissa were dressed as men,” replied Mrs. Jones.

“And supposed to be miles away,” added Miss Sawyer.

“Well,” Mrs. Stout began, “all I’ve got to say is that most men know their best girls when they see ’em, no matter what they’ve got on. Good-

ness!" she exclaimed as she glanced at the clock.  
"If it ain't twelve o'clock! My Peter's dinner  
will be late, and all on account of William  
Shakespeare."

**Chapter XI**  
**The Narrow Way**

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"MRS. FLINT," said the Reverend Elijah one morning when the family of three were at breakfast, "during the past week I have heard frequently of the contemplated theatrical performance by the members, and for the benefit, of the woman's club."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Flint, timidly, "everybody seems to be looking forward to it with pleasure."

"That was not the point I was about to make," said the parson, curtly. "You, of course, know that I disapprove of such pastimes."

"Why, yes, certainly, but it all was planned without my approval," explained his wife.

"Naturally, if you considered the dignity demanded of you as the wife of a clergyman." The heavy, rounded shoulders of this conventional clergyman were raised slightly, and his dull eyes peered over his spectacles at the troubled face of Mrs. Flint.

"But, Elijah —" she faltered.

"I have given the matter careful thought," interrupted the parson, "and have arrived at the conclusion that this performance is uncalled for,

unbecoming, undignified, and unnecessary." Mr. Flint never left the church — he was in the pulpit always, and for ever preaching.

"Elijah!" gasped his wife.

The parson's alliterative denouncement amused his son in the same degree that it caused his wife's dismay, and it was with difficulty that Will controlled his mirth.

"And furthermore," Mr. Flint continued, "it is my desire that you sever your connection with the organization immediately."

"But, Elijah, I am deeply interested in the work, and we — we need the money — I mean the club does," faltered Mrs. Flint.

"The evil one," said the parson, impressively, "employs many means and uses countless disguises for that unholy purpose."

"But surely you do not think that the principles of our club are wrong?"

"Not wholly; but the method pursued to further your purposes is far from my interpretation of right."

"But the other ladies, many of them belong to our church, and they —"

"Over them, in such matters, I have but feeble control," sighed the good man. "Were it possible

I would put a stop to the performance at any cost."

"What's the harm, father?" asked Will, who saw that his mother was certain to lose the argument, and pitied her.

"William," said the parson, turning on his son, "your knowledge of such matters is infinitesimal. The stage is not real, it is but a show of puppets, and by persons of uncertain character."

"But," persisted Will, "what have the morals of actors got to do with the stage and plays?"

"What have the morals of a preacher got to do with his sermons? In the church, and out of it, is not every action watched, every word listened to and repeated? Is he not supposed to be an example?"

"Yes, father, but after all he is only a man."

"An exemplary one."

"Usually," said Will in a way that neither his father nor mother understood. For several minutes they ate in silence.

"I thought," began Mrs. Flint with renewed courage, "that Shakespeare's works were above reproach."

"So they are; there's no finer reading, no clearer understanding of human nature than in

the plays of Shakespeare; but the performance of them is simply the making believe by actors that they are what they are not," patiently explained the parson. Will choked over his coffee in an effort to keep from laughing.

"Of course," sighed Mrs. Flint, resignedly, "if you insist I will leave the club."

"Let your action be guided by your own judgment, and consideration for the principles which I believe to be true. Perhaps the example of a worthy sister of our church who has already taken the step may make it easier for you to decide," said the parson in milder tones.

"Why, whom do you mean?" asked Mrs. Flint in surprise.

"Mrs. Deacon Walton."

"Has she resigned?"

"She has, or will at the next meeting, so her husband informed me last evening."

"Then of course I must do likewise," said Mrs. Flint, a little piqued to learn that Mrs. Walton had been the first to comply with the demands of their church.

"I knew that you could be relied upon to do your duty," replied the parson, triumphantly.

"But, father," said Will, quickly, with a trace

of indignation in his voice, "is it her duty to deny herself something that she believes to be right? Is it right for her to do a thing just because you wish it?"

"I consider it so. Sometimes we do not see, or understand, our duty as clearly as others. In that case, when we are guided by some one who is in a position to know, it is certainly right to do a thing, which, at the time, is against our own will." The parson was irritated by his son's interference, and spoke sharply.

"You may be right, but I can't seem to understand," said Will, respectfully. "But then my ideas, and ideals, are usually in opposition to yours; you are always positive that you are right, and I am equally certain that I am right; we are father and son, why do we always differ?"

"You are young, I am old; the world changes," replied the parson, shortly.

"But other men of your age have changed with the world."

"My son, while I do not live wholly in the past, I must cling to the customs and beliefs of my youth."

"But the stage, father," persisted Will, with an earnestness that was strange for him, "in

regard to that the ideas of most men have changed, and no one has been harmed; in fact, have we not been benefited? ”

“ No,” replied the parson, “ no one ever has, or ever will, receive good from it.” He had little respect for the opinion of his son, rebelled at what he considered his disrespectful argument, and was determined not to budge from the stand which he had taken.

“ This performance that the club is to give,” continued Will, “ can do no harm, you must grant that, and the ladies who are to take part are of unquestioned character.”

“ True, in regard to the ladies, more’s the pity; but the play, my son, professional or amateur, is wrong. As for the club itself, and all organizations of women outside of the church, I am not sure but that they are an unfortunate experiment — sowers of discord and discontent.” The parson was unmistakably angry.

“ Do you really believe that women should not be permitted to organize, to enjoy the companionship of others, outside of the home, after the manner of men? Do you believe that their ideals should be fixed, and no opportunity given to heighten and beautify them? ” Will asked these



questions with deliberation and without raising his voice, yet there were unmistakable signs of a controlled force that would have been impossible in a man who did not love a woman. The parson glared at his son for a moment before replying. "I repeat, it is an experiment — an experiment," he growled as he left the table and went to his study. Narrow was the way of this man, his creed was his religion; he loved his books more than he loved men; in name only was he a minister of God.

"I'm sorry, mother," said Will when the study door was closed. "Are you going to resign?"

"Yes," she replied, and there were tears in her eyes.

"There's no need of it," said Will, quickly.

"I've got to," continued Mrs. Flint.

"No, you haven't," replied Will, savagely.

"Will!" exclaimed his mother. "It is your father's wish."

"Well," replied Will, in a calmer tone, "if I ever marry, I hope that I shall have sense enough to let my wife decide such questions for herself."

"You, married?" said Mrs. Flint, "why, Will, I —"

“I said, ‘if,’ mother,” he laughed. “I must go to work first, and then if I find some one —”

“Will, are you sure that you have not found some one already?” she asked, and her voice trembled.

Will turned and looked out of the window. He dared not meet her eyes. Had his mother guessed his secret?

**Chapter XI****Girl Talk**

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"WHAT are you going to wear?" asked Fanny Tweedie, one afternoon while she and Barbara Wallace were rehearsing the scene from the "Lady of Lyons" which they, with Mrs. Blake, were to play at the club theatricals.

"What are the others, who are to play the part of men, going to wear?" questioned Barbara in reply.

"Oh, dresses fixed up in some outlandish way, but I had hoped that you —" said the amateur Pauline, impatiently.

"Would wear something out of the ordinary," Barbara interrupted, smilingly.

"Yes," replied Fanny, "Claude Melnotte should wear something — something unexpected."

Barbara laughed, but Fanny stood looking at her doubtfully.

"What in the world are you laughing at, Barbara Wallace?" she demanded.

"How would you define, or describe, an 'unexpected' costume?" asked Barbara.

"Oh," replied Fanny, "is that what amused you? I meant something stunning, something

that would make the people talk for weeks, something — ”

“ Dear me, don’t go on like that, Fanny, it’s too horrible, too impossible. I have an idea for a costume, but — ”

“ Well, tell me what your idea is.”

“ But I’m not sure yet. When — ”

“ Please, Barbara — ”

“ But, Fanny, I don’t know myself. When I do — ”

“ I promise not to breathe a word,” persisted Fanny, coaxingly.

“ You shall be the first to know when I have decided,” said Barbara. She liked Fanny despite her shallow nature, and Fanny was “ awfully fond ” of Barbara, and talked less about her to others than she did about anybody else.

“ There’s no use talking,” said Fanny when she saw that Barbara could not be teased into describing the costume she was to wear, “ some of the ladies are simply fearful in their parts, and I’m afraid that they will be laughed at when they appear in public.”

“ No doubt,” replied Barbara, “ if, by ‘ in public,’ you mean before the residents of Manville.”

"Yes, of course that's what I mean," Fanny continued. "*Everybody* will be there. The club and what it is doing has caused more talk than anything that has happened since the Declaration of Independence. And since Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Walton have resigned, and everybody knows that Mr. Flint is dreadfully set against the club and its theatricals, the Morning Glories have had a boom."

"Some one certainly has advertised us," said Barbara, much amused. Will had told her of the domestic scene at the parsonage.

"I suppose," continued Fanny, "that you knew all about Mrs. Flint's resigning before any of the rest of us." Barbara's face betrayed her. "Aren't you mean," Fanny went on, "not to tell."

"You little goose," replied Barbara, "what would you think of me if I ran and told everything that I knew about the minister's family — supposing that I ever did know anything about their affairs." Fanny did not think it mean for some folks to run and tell, but she would have been surprised if Barbara had done so.

"You might tell *me*," she pouted.

Barbara put her arm about Fanny, girl-fashion, and kissed her.

"Fanny, dear," she said, "there's something that I will tell you, something that I haven't told to a soul in the whole world." Fanny was all smiles and attention in an instant, and warmly squeezed Barbara's hand.

"I knew you would," she exclaimed.

"Mr. Flint —" Barbara began, but Fanny interrupted her.

"The minister?"

"No, the other Mr. Flint."

"Oh."

"Mr. Flint —"

"Why don't you call him Will, or Billy?"

Barbara did not choose to answer that question. A *Mr.* persistently used, is often a good sign — for the young man.

"Mr. Flint," Barbara began again, "is going away."

"To work?"

"Yes."

"Oh, isn't that lovely!"

"Yes," replied Barbara, without enthusiasm.

"I mean, isn't it splendid to think that he is going to do something — be somebody."

"Was he not somebody before?" asked Barbara, quickly.

"Yes, of course, but — you know how people have talked about him."

"And half that they have said is not true," said Barbara, resentfully.

"You and I know it, but the others don't. Most folks like to hear and believe horrible things about somebody else." (Fanny was wiser than she knew.) "When is he going?"

"To-morrow."

"And aren't you going to see him again before he goes?"

"Yes," Barbara replied as a pink flush spread over her cheeks, "to-night."

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**Chapter III****Jingle Bells**

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At four o'clock the next morning Mrs. Tweedie was awakened by the ringing of the door-bell. She sat up in bed and listened until it rang again.

"Ezra," she whispered, as she shook her sleeping husband.

"What's the matter?" asked Ezra, sleepily.

"Some one is ringing the door-bell."

"Who is it?" he yawned.

"How should I know? Get up and see."

Ezra crawled out of bed, lighted a lamp, put on his dressing-gown, and started down-stairs. When he had gone Mrs. Tweedie got up, put on her glasses, lighted a match, peered at the clock, and then muttered, "Disgraceful!"

Ezra asked, "Who is it?" before opening the door, and when he recognized the voice that replied nearly dropped the lamp so great was his astonishment.

"Miss Wallace!" he gasped, as he opened the door.

"I am sorry that I had to disturb you, Mr. Tweedie," was all that Barbara said as she hurried past him. Ezra closed and locked the door, went



up-stairs, looked at the clock and then at his wife.

"Where has she been?" he asked, as he blew out the light, and got into bed.

"What does it matter where she has been?" replied Mrs. Tweedie. "Is it not enough that she has been *out* until four o'clock in the morning?" Ezra certainly thought it strange, but did not venture to offer any excuses. "And to think," continued Mrs. Tweedie, "after all that we have done for her (and Barbara had paid for), that she should bring disgrace to our home in this manner!"

"But, my dear," replied Mr. Tweedie, soothingly, "perhaps there is some good reason."

"Impossible!" snapped his wife. Ezra gave it up and went to sleep, but Mrs. Tweedie spent the remainder of the night thinking dreadful things, and the most exasperating thought was that she did not know — she could only imagine.

The explanation or true story of the events of that night (escapade it was called afterward by many) was simple, though none the less important to those most concerned. Barbara had been invited by Will Flint to go on a sleigh-ride. She was ready at the appointed time, and, hearing him drive up and stop, had gone out before he

came to the door without telling Mrs. Tweedie where she was going. Mrs. Tweedie considered this omission a suspicious circumstance. She sat up until eleven o'clock, and then, being determined to know at what time Barbara returned, locked the door so that it could not be opened with a latch-key, and went to bed.

Will and Barbara chatted cheerfully as they drove away from the village into the real country where they were alone with the black forest, the fields of glistening snow, and the great white moon. Will was happy, and Barbara — at first she had regretted her promise to go, but after an hour had gone by a feeling of contentment and security stole over her, and she too was happy.

They had turned toward home and were going down a hill at a rapid gait when one of the runners of the sleigh slipped into an icy rut, and the borrowed, dilapidated affair collapsed. Nothing was injured except the sleigh, but they were ten miles from home, and not a house in sight. After Will had crawled out of the wreck, and helped Barbara to disentangle herself, he unhitched the horse and drew the remains of the sleigh to the side of the road. There was nothing for them to do except walk, so they started off with the horse

led behind. The nearest house was three miles, but Barbara and Will did not know when they passed it, or the next, and would not have stopped if they had. Their thoughts were of each other and the future, as they walked, hand in hand, along the white road that gleamed in the moonlight, and stretched away into — Only Barbara and Will, and the tired old horse plodding along behind, knew just what was said during that walk, but when they arrived at Mrs. Tweedie's gate Barbara had a man's love in her keeping, and Will had the promise of an answer when he had won it.

At breakfast that morning Barbara told that part of the story necessary to explain the hour at which she had returned. Fanny thought it must have been a great lark, and Mr. Tweedie and Tommy agreed with her, but Mrs. Tweedie looked sour and incredulous.

Later in the day Mrs. Tweedie learned that Will Flint had left town early that morning. Here was a mystery, she thought, and she did not rest until the whole story, or all that she could gather and imagine of it, was tucked away in her head with all the rest of her false ideas and ideals. In collecting the details she had found it necessary

to barter news for news, and when she had finished her calls, all Manville knew that Barbara Wallace and Will Flint had been on a sleigh-ride the night before, and had not returned until four o'clock that morning.

Poor Barbara, she anticipated disagreeable talk, but thoughts of those hours of the night before, and the earnest love of a strong man, soon drove away her fears. He had gone, but for her sake, and when he returned she knew what her answer would be.

**Chapter XIV****More Talk**

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"ARE we all here?" asked Mrs. Tweedie, one afternoon as she glanced about Miss Sawyer's parlour to see how many members of the play committee were present.

"All except Miss Wallace," Miss Sawyer replied, when she had counted noses.

"And she will not be here," said Mrs. Tweedie, quickly. "The schools have been opened."

"Ain't it a relief to have the children in school again, Mis' Jones?" asked Mrs. Stout.

"Indeed it is," replied Mrs. Jones.

"Why, Mrs. Stout, Mrs. Jones!" exclaimed Miss Sawyer. "Do you send your children to school merely to relieve yourselves of responsibility? I have thought always that children were sent to school to be educated."

"So they are," replied Mrs. Stout, "but if they can be educated, and at the same time be kept away from home long enough ev'ry day to give their mothers a chance to do the housework, why, I say that school is a twin blessin'."

"That is just what I think," said Mrs. Jones, in an amen sort of way. "And I'm sure that the

children in Miss Wallace's school have an excellent woman to instruct and care for them."

"As a teacher, yes," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "but —" she stopped abruptly, and looked wise.

"Mother," said Fanny, reprovingly.

"Fanny, I am capable of managing such affairs without the interference of girls," replied Mrs. Tweedie, sharply.

"Pardon me, but is it not time to begin our meeting?" Miss Sawyer asked, timidly.

"Yes, it is!" replied Mrs. Stout. "The play committee's off the track again."

"Well, let us get on to the track and go ahead," said Mrs. Tweedie, sneeringly.

"What's this meetin' for, anyway?" asked Mrs. Stout.

The ladies looked inquiringly at Miss Sawyer, who had called them together.

"There are many details," she began, "to be worked out in regard to our entertainment: programmes, tickets, music, advertising —"

She was interrupted by Mrs. Stout who was suddenly overcome by a spasm of laughter.

"Advertisin'!" she choked, "people for ten miles —" another burst of laughter prevented her from continuing for a moment. "People for

ten miles 'round are talkin' about nothin' else. Don't spend a cent for advertisin'."

"Quite true," added Mrs. Tweedie, "our club and entertainment are in the mouths of everybody."

"And I'm 'fraid they've got a hard pill to swaller," said Mrs. Stout, wiping her eyes.

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Tweedie quickly demanded.

"Oh, nothin' against anybody in pertic'ler, only it has struck me that some of us old women in the show are goin' to be dreadful funny when we ain't s'posed to be."

"The people know that we do not pretend to be more than amateurs," pleaded Miss Sawyer.

"I know that," replied Mrs. Stout, "but there are good and bad amatoors."

"It is too bad of you to say such things, Mrs. Stout," said Mrs. Blake. "I am sure that we shall do quite as well as we are expected to do."

"Of course," smiled Mrs. Stout, "but we're bound to make mistakes, and we don't want to be any bigger fools than we can help."

"Fools indeed!" snapped Mrs. Tweedie, "I am sure that the ladies who are to take part in our entertainment are of exceptional intelligence and ability — with one or two exceptions."

"And I'm prob'ly the biggest exception," said Mrs. Stout.

"I mentioned no names," replied Mrs. Tweedie, haughtily.

"You don't have to," retorted Mrs. Stout.

Mrs. Tweedie's face was flushed with anger. The others looked frightened, they feared that the open rupture between Mrs. Stout and Mrs. Tweedie, which had been brewing since the first meeting of the club, was about to take place. But Mrs. Tweedie's anger was too intense for words, and after glaring at the cause of her wrath for a moment, she sank back in her chair with the last word trembling on her lips — unspoken.

To dictate, to be absolute, was Mrs. Tweedie's joy — her life; but her power was waning, though she did not realize it. A mild spirit of rebellion had crept into the minds of some of the members which promised to bear fruit before the expiration of her term of office. Mrs. Stout, the only outspoken rebel, caused Mrs. Tweedie more annoyance than any other member because she would speak truths that were certain to hit somebody, and Mrs. Tweedie always presented the most tempting mark.

"What have you learned concerning the or-



chestra, Mrs. Jones?" asked Miss Sawyer when the temporary cessation of talk had cleared away the clouds.

"Orchestra!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, without giving Mrs. Jones a chance to reply. "An orchestra will cost too much. Can't we get somebody to play the piano for nothing? We're tryin' to make money—anybody can spend it."

Mrs. Tweedie had set her heart upon having an orchestra, and immediately trained her guns on Mrs. Stout's economical proposition and opened fire.

"Money is not the only thing," she said, epigrammatically. "We must not forget what we owe to art. To my mind orchestral music is an absolutely essential adjunct to a Thespian production."

"Perhaps that's so," replied Mrs. Stout, doubtfully. "I ain't quite pos'tive."

Mrs. Tweedie smiled. With her big words she had scored a bull's-eye.

"As for the money," Mrs. Stout continued, "maybe it ain't the 'only thing,' but it comes precious near it."

"But, Mrs. Stout," said Fanny Tweedie,

"we've just *got* to make a 'hit' with our first entertainment."

"Fanny, we are not talking about baseball," remonstrated Mrs. Tweedie, who had absorbed unconsciously some knowledge of the national game from her son Thomas, and for the moment forgot the application to the stage of the word in question.

"The word 'hit' means success on the stage," replied Fanny. "Does it not, Miss Sawyer?"

"I have seen the word so used in the newspapers," answered Miss Sawyer.

"The newspapers," said Mrs. Tweedie, sharply, "are not written in the best English."

"Perhaps they ain't," interposed Mrs. Stout, "but they're written the way most of us talk and so that we can understand 'em."

"The word has little to do with the business before us," snapped Mrs. Tweedie, dismissing the subject. "You mentioned programmes and tickets, Miss Sawyer, what about them?"

"The expense will be only a trifle; I suppose Mr. Hunter will do the printing," replied Miss Sawyer.

"Of course," said Mrs. Tweedie, in a positive way that the ladies did not like, because Mr.

Hunter was Mrs. Tweedie's cousin, a descendant of the famous ancestor. "And now," she continued, "is there anything else that has not been attended to?"

"Has the hall been hired?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Really!" exclaimed Miss Sawyer, "I had wholly forgotten it!"

"You'd better get after it quick, or some of the men folks will get ahead of us with some kind of a political meetin'," said Mrs. Stout. "Then we'll have to 'stoop to conquer' all right."

"You will attend to the matter to-day, Miss Sawyer?" Mrs. Tweedie asked, and upon receiving an affirmative nod continued, "And now, if there is —"

"Oh," interrupted Mrs. Jones, "what shall we do about Mr. Flint? He is so firmly opposed to our entertainment that —"

"He's our advertisin' agent," remarked Mrs. Stout, irreverently.

"What *can* we do?" said Miss Sawyer.

"What can *he* do?" asked Fanny.

"It grieves me," Mrs. Tweedie began, "to think that we are engaged upon an enterprise to which our worthy pastor is so much opposed, but I do not see my way clear to yield to his opposition."

Surely the club cannot give up the entertainment."

"All we can do," said Mrs. Stout, "is to go ahead with the show and pay no attention to what he says."

"Mrs. Stout, our entertainment is not to be a 'show' in any sense," replied Mrs. Tweedie, indignantly.

"As I said once before to-day, it may be for some of us," retorted Mrs. Stout.

"Well, I attend Mr. Flint's church," said Mrs. Jones, "and have the greatest respect for him, but I must say that I cannot fully agree with him in his ideas about the stage."

"Nor I," said Miss Sawyer.

"He's too stiff-backed for me," was Mrs. Stout's contribution.

"Me too," chirped Fanny, and her mother and Mrs. Blake silently agreed with the others. For once they were of one mind. Mr. Flint could rave until he was hoarse.

"For the land sakes!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Stout, as she sat up very straight with her eyes fixed upon something on the other side of the room. Then, as though controlled by some mysterious, irresistible force, she got up and

walked toward the mantel, and when near enough to be sure that her eyes were not deceiving her, stopped. "If it ain't a picture of Sam Billin's!"

Miss Sawyer blushed, and wondered how she could have been so careless. Poor Lizzie, with her Sam was a sort of "forlorn hope," and everybody knew it, but Mrs. Stout did not spare her.

"It's usually pretty serious when he gets 'round to givin' his picture," she said. "I wouldn't have believed it, Miss Sawyer, because Sam ain't exactly your kind. To be sure he's got some good points, but he ain't literary a mite."

"Mrs. Stout," said Mrs. Tweedie, angrily, "we came here this morning to transact business connected with our entertainment, and *not* to meddle with the affairs of others."

"Well," replied Mrs. Stout, good-naturedly, "we seem to have done both pretty well."

"I *must* be going," said Mrs. Jones, as she jumped up and bustled about getting her things and began putting them on. The others followed her example and thus again was the rupture that seemed inevitable between Mrs. Tweedie and Mrs. Stout postponed.

When they had gone Miss Sawyer took the photograph of Sam Billings from the mantel,

looked at it for a long time, and then, with a sigh which could not be suppressed, she hid the picture in a drawer beneath a package of photographs of forgotten friends.

**Chapter XV****Two Letters**

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**WILL — FRIEND:**—Since my last letter much has happened in Manville of interest to us both — more than I have time to tell now. The schools opened last Monday, and the children really seemed glad to get back — especially the dirty ones. I have discovered that work gives more happiness than idleness and the gossip of the village.

Many versions of the story of our accident have been circulated the length and breadth of the land. Since then Mrs. Tweedie has kept me at arm's length, but Fanny has become a real friend, one whom I need and appreciate.

Every spare moment we spend rehearsing the scene that we are to give at the club entertainment.

The Morning Glories are blooming all the time, and the entertainment is expected to be the event of the season.

I called on the Duncans yesterday. Rufe has reformed, temporarily, at least, and Mrs. Duncan, poor creature, is happier than she has been for many years.

They had found out who put the flowers on little Bessie's grave, and were very grateful.

Good Mrs. Stout continues to keep people and things stirred up. I imagine that her motto must be "The Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth." I never would have believed that the truth spoken at all times, regardless of anybody and everything, could be so amusingly disturbing.

What you have written about your work is very interesting — please tell me more. Whenever I rehearse the part that I am to play there are many — many lines that send my thoughts to you. The closing words are best: "All angels guard and keep you."

BARBARA.

*January seventeenth.*

Jan. 20, 18 —.

MY DEAR BARBARA:— Until I went away and began to receive your letters I never knew what a real letter was like. When I was at college, father wrote me a weekly sermon, and mother sent pages of don'ts. They are doing the same now, but you send me what I need — cheerfulness and encouragement.



My work continues to be interesting, though hard, but hard work is what I need, too. Until now, I never knew how satisfying it could be. I never knew what it was to feel like a man until I began the struggle urged on by love for a good woman.

From your letters I have received the impression that my native town is being stirred up in a manner that must be a revelation to the inhabitants who have been asleep for so many years. If the Morning Glories never do anything else they will have accomplished a great deal. I know that you will be splendid in your part, and hope to be able to come down to see you, but cannot be sure until the last moment.

I have resumed my evening studies and take much pleasure in them.

Since I have been here I have attended church regularly — something that I have not done since I was physically big enough to refuse — and please don't laugh when I confess that I enjoy the service very much.

The sermons are different from any that I have ever heard before. The clergyman seems to be talking to *me*, about clean thoughts and right living. And when the service is over I feel stronger and better, and that the world is a beautiful place.

It is beautiful, Barbara, because you are in it. Each day I long so much to see you. What is there that I would not give for one moment in your presence? As it is, your letters are my life.

WILL.

**Chapter XVI****Advertising**

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"How d'y'," said Sam Billings, one morning as he sauntered into Stout's Grocery, where the proprietor was busily engaged sorting a barrel of apples.

"Mornin'," replied Peter.

"Nice kind of weather."

"Yes."

"How's things?"

"Nothin' to complain about."

"You're lucky."

"You mean I 'tend to business."

"What's that got to do with luck?"

"Most everything."

"What you gettin' for apples now?" Sam asked as he picked up one of the largest and took a huge bite.

"Nothin' — for some," replied Peter, without looking up.

"Give 'em away?" munched Sam, innocently.

"Don't have to."

"You mean some folks pay, and some folks don't?"

"Somethin' like that."

"And them that do pay have to make up for them that don't," Sam chuckled, wisely.

"That's about it," replied Peter, wearily, as he rolled the empty barrel toward the rear of the store.

"Say, Peter," said Sam, following, "I want to borrow some big sheets of wrappin' paper and your markin' ink and brush, if you don't mind."

"Goin' to write a letter?" grinned Peter.

"Now, Peter, quit your teasin'. I'll tell you all about it when it's finished."

"All right, help yourself," said Peter, as he went behind the counter, and turned an attentive ear, and a smiling what-will-you-have-this-morning look on a customer who had just come in.

Sam took twenty-five or thirty of the largest sheets of wrapping-paper he could find, and went into the back room where the oil, molasses, vinegar, empty boxes, etc., were kept. After rummaging about for a few minutes he found the marking ink and brush. Then he spread one of the sheets of paper on a bench, dipped the brush in the ink, and eyed the paper with a how-shall-I-begin look. Five minutes later Peter came out to

draw some oil and found him in the same attitude.

"Got somethin' on your mind, Sam?" he asked.

"Eh! Oh, yes," Sam replied, "I say, Peter, have you got any old show-bills?"

"There's one in the window 'bout the firemen's 'play-out' over to Union Corners."

"That won't do."

"Well, then there's some old circus bills pasted on the inside of the barn door," said Peter, as he squatted in front of the kerosene barrel and began filling a can.

"I dunno, guess I'll take a look at 'em anyway," replied Sam, doubtfully, as he started out of the back door toward the barn.

Peter watched through the doorway, and wondered what Sam was up to until he was called back to business by the kerosene which was running over the top of the can.

Sam returned to the back room after an absence of ten minutes, took up his brush and eagerly went to work. After half an hour's labour he had painted something that resembled a home-made no-trespassing-beware-of-the-dog sign upside down, which read:

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“BIG SHOW  
COME ONE COME ALL AND SEE  
THE MORNING GLORY  
CLUB in  
SHAKESPEARE.


VETERANS HALL MANVILLE Wed. Evg. Feb. 17, 18—, at eight o'clock SHARP doors open at SEVEN tickets 25 cents RESERVED seats and CHILDREN 15 cents EXTRA. no CHILDREN and DOGS in ARMS not admitted.”

Sam held up the sheet and read it again and again with pride. His only regret was that he had no red or green paint to heighten the effect and make the poster a work of real art.

“Peter,” he called, when he was sure that his work could not be improved, and when Peter appeared in the doorway, asked: “What do you think of that?”

“Well,” said Peter, slowly, after he had read the poster, “it shows up some.”

“I should say it did,” replied Sam, proudly. “And it’s jist what the show needs. Ev’ry house and barn for ten miles ’round oughter be papered with ’em inside and out.”



"Your idea?" queried Peter.

"Ev'ry word."

"What you goin' to do with it?"

"Make a dozen more and stick 'em up 'round."

"Does the club women folks know?" asked Peter.

"Well, — er — I — I've talked it over with one of the officers," replied Sam, hesitating suspiciously. "And she kinder thought that some advertisin' ought to be done, though they didn't want to spend any money doin' it. So I thought I'd help 'em out and s'prise 'em at the same time."

"They'll be surprised all right," said Peter, grinning.

"Think so?"

"Sure."

"Guess they'll think my advertisin' scheme's all right."

"Hope so, for your sake," replied Peter, as he returned to his work.

Sam worked industriously during the remainder of the forenoon, and by noontime had finished twelve more posters just like the first.

"Mind if I put one of these up on the outside of the store?" he asked, as he emerged from the

back room with one of the posters carefully held up in front of himself.

"Go ahead," said Peter, who was busy and had been bothered enough for one morning. Ten minutes later the poster was exposed on the front of the store where the public — when it happened that way — could see it. Sam was patiently waiting for the first passer-by when Alick Purbeck drove up. Alick read the poster through, and then gave a long whistle.

"Well, what you got to say?" asked Sam, who had watched from the doorway for the effect of the poster on Alick.

"Reads like a circus; some of your doin's, I'll bet," Alick replied.

"Yes, 'tis; you don't know a good thing when you see it."

"Perhaps not," retorted Alick, "but I know some folks in town that will appreciate it. If you knew how much paint you'd got on your face, you'd go and stick your head into a bucket of turpentine."

Sam sneered at Alick's remark, but, though he did have some misgivings as to how his work would be received, was determined to carry out his original plan. Without deigning to look or



Speak to Alick or Peter, he went into the store, filled his mouth with tacks, put a hammer in his pocket, took another poster, and went across the street to Mr. Flint's church, where he tacked the poster on to the bulletin board over the notice of an oyster party.

The opposition of Mr. Flint to the stage in general, and the club entertainment in particular, did not occur to Sam. His only thought was that the church was a good and conspicuous place for a poster.

Alick Purbeck watched from the doorway when Sam started across the road, and when he saw what his object was called Peter.

"See what that blamed fool's doin'," he said.

"He'll get set on so hard some day that he'll know it," was Peter's comment.

When the poster was secure in its place, Sam walked slowly backward until he reached the middle of the road, where he stopped with his hands in his pockets, his head cocked to one side, and viewed his work with a critical eye. He had been there but a moment when Doctor Jones drove up, and when he saw Sam's peculiar attitude stopped.

"Hello, Sam, what do you see that is so ab-

sorbing?" he asked, after waiting a moment for Sam to move or speak. In reply Sam waved his hand proudly toward the poster on the church.

The doctor looked and read.

"Some of your work?" he asked.

Sam nodded.

"So you are the club's advertising agent?"

"Nope," replied Sam, modestly. "I jest wanted to help 'em out a little."

"Very kind, I'm sure," said the doctor, as he drove away wondering who had made the mistake.

When Sam returned to the store he found Alick Purbeck standing in the doorway grinning.

"Do you expect to live long, Sam?" asked Alick.

Sam pushed by without replying, went to the back room, rolled up the remaining posters, walked out of the store without looking to the right or left, and marched off up the road.

By nightfall twelve more of Sam's posters were displayed in as many conspicuous places, and before the last one had been tacked up the whole town — except the members of the Morning Glory Club — was laughing.

Mrs. Tweedie was furious when Tommy asked if he could go to the "Big Show," and poor Ezra,

he would have thought it funny had not his wife scolded the whole evening just as though he was to blame.

That night, after they were abed, Mrs. Stout told Peter, among other things, that he didn't have the sense of a half-grown puppy to let that fool of a Sam Billings do such a thing. When she had finished it was time for Peter to get up — and he thought so, too.

The Reverend Elijah Flint was in a terrible rage (state of righteous indignation). He went to the church as soon as he heard of the outrage, tore the offending poster into fragments, and vehemently declared that the perpetrator of the crime should be punished to the full extent of the law.

And Miss Sawyer, poor Lizzie, she knew that it was her fault, and bemoaned her indiscretion in mentioning advertising to Sam Billings. She wept all night, and vowed that she would never speak to him again as long as she lived.

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## Chapter XVII

### More Advertising

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THE next morning Mrs. Tweedie sent messages by her son Thomas to the members of the play committee requesting them to meet at her home that afternoon to consider a matter of "distressing importance." At two o'clock all of the committee had complied with the request, excepting Miss Sawyer, who sent word that she was "indisposed," and she might truthfully have added "to come."

"Ladies," Mrs. Tweedie began, solemnly, "yesterday one of the *other sex*, an unprincipled creature by the name of Billings, inflicted upon our club an irreparable injury. You have seen or at least heard of the hideous posters that some time yesterday were put up in a dozen or more conspicuous places about town. Furthermore, the sensitive feelings of an educated and highly respected citizen have been deeply wounded by this act of wantonness — I refer to the Reverend Mr. Flint. One of the posters was placed, and remained for several hours, upon the bulletin of his, I might say our, church. We all know Mr. Flint's aversion to anything pertaining to

the stage, yet he has refrained from speaking of our entertainment publicly out of regard for the members of his church who are interested in the club. What his attitude from now on will be I dare not conjecture. As for the miserable villain who is responsible for the outrage — words fail to express my feelings.”

“Quote Shakespeare,” suggested Mrs. Stout.

“This is not the time for jesting, Mrs. Stout,” replied Mrs. Tweedie, in a tone that would have withered any one but Mrs. Stout.

“Nobody knows it better than I do,” she retorted. “I’ve got reason to be as mortified as anybody, because the outlandish work was begun in my husband’s store. Of course, he ain’t to blame, but he ought to have told the fool that what he was doin’ would make trouble.”

“No one attaches any blame upon you or your husband,” Mrs. Tweedie replied.

“I’m sure,” said Mrs. Jones, “that I cannot see how Mr. Stout had anything to do with it. It seems to me that it was not done maliciously, any way, but more in the spirit of a practical joke.”

“Practical meddlesomeness!” snapped Mrs.

Stout; "and the man that did it was set up to it, in my opinion, by a woman in this club!"

The ladies looked at Mrs. Stout, and then at each other in astonishment.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Tweedie. "If you are so positive pray tell us about it."

"Well, I ain't exactly positive," Mrs. Stout began, slowly, "but I guess at things sometimes, and come pretty near bein' right, 'specially when two and two make four. I ain't a woman that'll hurt anybody's good name unless it's been rightly damaged before by theirselves. In this case I ain't sure, so I won't mention no names, only say what I think made Sam Billin's do what he did." Poor Mrs. Stout, for the first time in her life she failed to find the direct path to the point, and wallowed helplessly about in a meaningless slough of words. "Well," she continued, "I don't seem to be gettin' ahead very fast, but what I wanted to say was this: You know that we talked some about advertisin' at a meetin' of the committee awhile ago, and decided not to spend any money on it, but after the meetin' was over that day one of the ladies said to me as we was goin' home that *she* thought that somethin' ought to be done about advertisin'. Now, I think that she,

or somebody else that thought same as she did, must have talked with Sam Billin's, and told him her opinion about advertisin', and he agreed with her, and went off and done it."

The ladies were disappointed. The delicious bit of scandal that they had anticipated was not forthcoming.

"What you have told us," said Mrs. Tweedie, "is very indefinite."

"It's about as definite as anything I hear at the club, only I didn't mention no names — some folks ain't so careful," retorted Mrs. Stout, who was angry with herself.

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Jones, "we are just as much in the dark as ever. We know what has been done, and who did it, the question is —"

"What are we goin' to do about it?" interrupted Mrs. Stout.

"We owe Mr. Flint an apology," Mrs. Tweedie replied.

"That's easy," said Mrs. Stout, "and don't cost anything."

"The virtue of dutifulness has nothing to do with ease or cost," replied Mrs. Tweedie, loftily. "I shall write the letter myself, and assume the full responsibility. Now, in regard to the creature

that committed the crime, shall we take any legal steps? ”

“ Goodness, no ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Stout, in alarm. “ Legal steps cost ten dollars apiece, and there’s no tellin’ where they’ll lead to.”

Everybody laughed at this remark, and apparently good nature was restored.

“ It would only mean more advertising,” said Mrs. Blake, “ and that is just what we are objecting to now.”

“ That’s so,” replied Mrs. Stout; “ we’ve been advertised worse’n a circus or soap; let’s hide our bright and shinin’ light under a basket for awhile.”

After the ladies had gone Mrs. Tweedie had only time to scold Fanny, give Dora some instructions about dinner, tell Ezra that “ If you had a woman’s club on your hands you would have been insane weeks ago,” which Ezra thought very likely, when the Reverend Elijah Flint was announced. Despite the trials of the previous twenty-four hours, Mrs. Tweedie assumed a humble look as she entered the parlour and greeted her solemn-visaged pastor.

“ I have called, Mrs. Tweedie,” he began, after declining to be seated, “ on a matter of grave



importance to our church and myself. Perhaps it will not be necessary for me to — ”

“ I understand, Mr. Flint,” she said, with proper gravity.

“ Do you fully realize the false position in which our church has been placed? ” asked the parson, impressively.

“ I do, and sincerely regret the unfortunate circumstance.”

“ Unfortunate,” he repeated, as though he did not think the word adequate. “ Mrs. Tweedie, our church has been defiled, desecrated, by a wanton, worthless wretch, and I desire to know whether your club, or any member of it, is responsible, even in the slightest degree, for the outrage.”

“ Not to my knowledge,” replied Mrs. Tweedie — but she had guessed, with Mrs. Stout’s assistance.

“ I am profoundly relieved to hear you say so,” said Mr. Flint, as he started toward the door. “ Of course, you know my convictions regarding the stage? ” Mrs. Tweedie bowed affirmatively. “ I have refrained from expressing myself publicly,” he continued, as he stopped with his hand on the door-knob, “ but since the occurrence of

yesterday, I feel that it is my duty to announce from the pulpit next Sunday my position in regard to the matter. Good afternoon."

As Mrs. Tweedie closed the door on the parson she groaned: " More advertising."

**Chapter XVIII****The Big Show**

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ON the February day appointed for the Morning Glory theatricals, the sun shone brightly — all nature was the same, but in Manville the day seemed different. Expectancy was in the air, and suppressed excitement in the heads of those possessing a bit of yellow pasteboard that entitled them to admission to the "Big Show." The men paused often at their work to talk of the event, and the women, especially the members of the club, forgot their families, their housework — everything except the approaching event.

Early in the morning a half-dozen of the club-women were at the hall superintending the unloading and disposition of a load of furniture which had been collected from the homes of particularly enthusiastic members. This unavoidable inconvenience, which usually accompanies other preparations for amateur theatricals, was especially necessary in this case in order that the barren stage might be properly dressed, and the shabby scenery saved from loneliness. The whole club turned out in the afternoon, and the

hall and stage became a scene of bustling, chattering confusion. As the crisis approached Miss Sawyer, as stage directress, failed in her attempts to control the situation, and Mrs. Tweedie, "the powerful," as she was now called by many, assumed command, and became more dignified and dictatorial than ever.

At six o'clock the stage was set for the first scene, and some of the ladies were nervously pacing the creaking boards, book in hand, muttering their lines, and gesticulating ridiculously in a final spasmodic effort. In a corner of the hall Miss Sawyer was murmuring to a bunch of withered flowers; in an anteroom Mrs. Stout was being coached by Mrs. Jones in the pronunciation of some difficult words, and in a corridor Mrs. Thornton was trying to console Mrs. Darling, whose costume had not arrived.

The doors were opened to the public at seven o'clock, with Ezra Tweedie on guard to take tickets, and his son Tommy to distribute programmes. Ezra was smilingly happy because it was the first time for years that he had been permitted to do anything in public. He would have missed this chance if Mrs. Tweedie could have arranged in any other way to keep in touch with the

box office. The public was ready when the doors were opened, and charged unceremoniously upon Ezra, Tommy, and the lady ushers, with pinks in their hair, all of whom had more than they could properly do during the next hour. At eight o'clock the hall was filled with the "best" people in Manville, and some of the worst — worst, perhaps, only because they did not have the price of a seat in the front rows. The last person to enter was Sam Billings, who acted as though he did not care to have his presence known. Ezra scowled harmlessly as he took his ticket. Sam peeked cautiously into the hall, then turned to Ezra with a triumphant look and whispered: "Advertisin' pays, don't it?"

Twenty minutes after the time advertised for the performance to begin the audience was suddenly hushed to a funereal stillness by Mrs. Tweedie's two bells — she would have things shipshape, and succeeded, barring the orchestra, which had been found to be too expensive. The curtain was encouraged on its ascent by the strains of "My Old Kentucky Home," played on the piano by a Miss Bean, a member of Mr. Flint's church, who, in a spirit of fashionable recklessness in regard to her pastor's opinion, had consented to

play. Despite the music, perhaps because of it, the curtain balked when half-way up, then stuck fast. While the cause of the trouble was being investigated, accompanied by the sound of hurrying footsteps and loud whispers from "behind the scenes," Miss Bean continued to play "My Old Kentucky Home." When she was approaching the end of the piece for the sixth time, the curtain was yanked up sufficiently for the audience to get a two-thirds view of the stage.

The curtain certainly acted badly, but it was a star in comparison with the majority of the performers. It was fully three minutes after the curtain was raised before Mrs. Stout, as the Duke in the trial scene from the "Merchant of Venice," entered, followed by her "soot" in single file. Ten minutes later everybody knew that those who had said that the people of Manville would not, or could not, appreciate Shakespeare, did not know what they were talking about.

The scene was a decided hit, and was talked about for years afterward as the funniest thing that ever happened in Manville.

The balcony scene, from "Romeo and Juliet," which followed, performed by Fanny Tweedie as Juliet, and Mrs. Darling, in a rainy-day skirt, as

Romeo, was more like real acting. It was enjoyed by the audience, but not uproariously.

Then came the scene from the "Lady of Lyons" in which Pauline discovers that she is the victim of a trick. Fanny and Mrs. Blake played well, but Barbara's costume and her appearance caused a murmur of amazement. When she spoke, however, the pathos of the conscience-stricken lover rang so true that the gaping audience was instantly stilled. For the moment men and women alike were fascinated, though not many really approved, and for this there was little cause for wonder. Barbara's costume was new to Manville, and a surprise even to the club-women. As Fanny Tweedie had wished, it was "unexpected;" yet it was worn innocently and with pure thought, although that was something difficult for the narrow-minded to understand.

The closing feature of the entertainment was the production of Miss Sawyer's original play, "Yellow Roses" ("First time on any stage"), which withered and died a painless death.

The curtain fell — part way — at eleven-thirty, with the audience "all present."

Despite the contrariness of the curtain, the lapses of memory, the long waits, and the slowly

taken cues, the people of Manville enjoyed the "Big Show."

When the audience had gone, Mrs. Stout, with wrinkled forehead, sat at a table counting the proceeds as best she could with some one asking every moment, "How much did we make?" Many of the ladies looked grave and were acting strangely. There was much whispering going on, but it ceased suddenly when Barbara and Fanny came from the dressing-room ready to go home.

"You're the star, Miss Wallace," called Mrs. Stout, when she saw them. Barbara stopped before her and smiled. "And your costume," she continued, "was just the sweetest I ever saw."

At that moment Mrs. Tweedie approached, her face showing intense anger.

"What are the receipts, Mrs. Stout?" she asked, sharply.

"I don't know yet," Mrs. Stout replied. "I was just tellin' Miss Wallace how much I liked her costume. Did you ever see anything just like it?"

"Never!" thundered Mrs. Tweedie.

"Why, didn't you think it was pretty?" asked Mrs. Stout, in surprise.



"It was indecent!" hissed Mrs. Tweedie, as she glared at Barbara.

Everybody was looking and listening, but, excepting Fanny, too astonished to speak.

"Mother, how can you!" she exclaimed, indignantly, but Mrs. Tweedie walked quickly into the dressing-room, and slammed the door.

"Well, of all the tigeresses!" gasped Mrs. Stout.

Barbara was stunned. Fanny led her from the building, and on the way home tried to make amends for her mother's anger. But Barbara understood — the consciousness of her mistake had come like a blow in the face. Oh, if Will were only here, she thought. He had written that he could not come to the performance, but had sent all sorts of good wishes for her success. She needed him now more than she had ever needed a friend before.

The Tweedie family, excepting Tommy, argued long and late that night concerning Barbara and her costume. Mrs. Tweedie was the minority, but she won, and her decision was that Barbara must quit their roof the next day.

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Chapter XIX  
The Day After

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"Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Darling, as she ran into Mrs. Thornton's just after breakfast the next morning to finish what she did not have time to say the night before.

"You mean Miss Wallace?"

"Yes; did you —"

"Never!"

"I wouldn't have thought she'd dared!" said Mrs. Darling, with a sanctimonious look on her pretty face.

"Nor I."

"Wonder what Mrs. Tweedie thinks."

"She was in a rage last night."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes, she was awfully angry."

"I wouldn't have dared to wear such a costume, would *you*?"

"Not for worlds."

"It *was* pretty, though."

"And she looked terribly stunning."

"Yes, but I'm afraid that there'll be trouble over it in the club."

"Shouldn't wonder a mite."

"Well, I must be going; good-bye."

"Good-bye; if you hear anything —"

"I'll run in; good-bye."

This was a sample of the talk that was going on all over Manville the morning after the "Big Show." Masters, mistresses, and maids, all were talking; at front doors, back doors, in the parlours, in the kitchens, on the corners — everywhere. Few praised — many censured. And poor Barbara, it was her name that was on every lip. By night everybody in Manville had taken sides for or against her, and, strange to relate, more men than women were ready to defend her.

Stout's Grocery was the objective of many of the male population that morning. Mr. Blake, the undertaker, was the first to arrive.

"A splendid show, Peter," he said.

"Fine."

"Manville ought to be proud."

"She had."

"Miss Wallace made a great hit, didn't she?"

"Say, wa'n't she great!" replied Peter, enthusiastically.

"She was, and her costume —" Mr. Blake continued, but Peter interrupted him.

"Beat 'em all," he said.

"I suppose that some of the stiff-backs are offended," remarked Mr. Blake, after a pause.

"What if they be?" asked Peter, indignantly. Just then Doctor Jones came in. "Mornin', doctor."

"Good morning," the doctor cheerfully replied.

"Did you go to the show last night, doctor?" asked Mr. Blake.

"Yes, I got there just in time to see Miss Wallace."

"Like her?"

"Well," said the doctor, slowly, "I have always liked her, but now I think she's immense. Send our order up early, will you, Peter?" And then he hurried out of the store, bumping into Sam Billings, who was coming in.

"Hello, Doc," said Sam, familiarly, "what you got to say about the show?" The doctor, not caring to listen to a long argument, continued on his way without replying.

"Didn't that show beat all creation?" was Sam's greeting as he entered the store after his encounter with the doctor. "And did you notice the crowd? They can say all they're a mind to 'gainst advertisin', but I say it pays. That hall

wouldn't have been half-full if I hadn't taken hold."

Alick Purbeck came in from the back room in time to hear enough of what Sam said to know what he was blowing about.

"Say, Sam, can't you tell us now who put you up to that advertisin' scheme?" he asked.

"I dunno's that's any of your business," replied Sam, sulkily.

"No, it ain't," said Alick, "but I happen to know that it kicked up a row in the church and the woman's club, and folks do say that it was Miss Sawyer that put the idea into your head."

"Well," drawled Sam, "I won't deny that she *said* somethin', but she didn't *do* nothin'. I'm the only one responsible."

"Just as I thought," said Alick, knowingly. "I knew you'd been hangin' round her some this winter."

"Yes, you most always know everything that's goin' on," retorted Sam. "Back doors can't keep their mouths shut."

Alick resented this remark, and the resentment was in the form of a rotten apple which struck the offender full in the mouth.

"Quit that foolin'," growled Peter, in time to prevent trouble.

At that moment Ezra Tweedie slunk into the store, casting glances of fear behind at every step as though some dreadful monster was on his trail. He shut the door carefully, then went to the stove, held out his hands to be warmed, shivered, and sighed. His face was drawn and white, and the telltale circles beneath his eyes told of a sleepless night.

"Mornin', Ezra," said Peter, cordially.

"Good morning, gentlemen," replied Ezra, in a weak voice, as he glanced furtively about.

"You're not feeling well, Mr. Tweedie?" inquired Mr. Blake, sympathetically.

"No," replied Ezra, "I — I'm slightly indisposed, but nothing serious — nothing serious."

"And how is Mrs. Tweedie after all the work she has done?" Mr. Blake continued. Ezra shuddered and coughed.

"She is — a — somewhat nervous," he replied, hesitatingly.

"I don't wonder," blurted Sam, "but I guess she's kinder tickled over the big hit the show made, ain't she?"

"Oh, yes, yes, but —"

Ezra was spared by the entrance of Deacon Walton, whose opinion at that moment was more to be desired than anything that Ezra, in his sorry condition, might say.

Urged by Mr. Flint, the deacon had advised his wife to resign from the club, which she had done, but when the day of the performance came neither the deacon nor his wife could resist the temptation to attend and see what it was like. Their presence caused surprise, but they seemed to enjoy themselves, and many thought that perhaps Mr. Flint had weakened, and had taken that method of showing it. Those present at the store that morning felt that an explanation was due, and Sam proceeded to "pump."

"How'd you like the show, deacon?" he asked.

"Well," the deacon began, as he drew off his mittens and rubbed his hands, "most of it was good, but there was one young woman —" the deacon paused and pointed a long bony finger at Mr. Blake. Peter dropped his work to listen. "One young woman," the deacon repeated, "who was — er — indiscreet in her — er — what she wore."

There was silence for a moment, during which Ezra seemed to shrivel up within his overcoat.

"You mean Miss Wallace, I suppose?" said Mr. Blake.

"I do. The morals of the people of Manville have been shocked," replied the deacon, solemnly.

"You mean them that's got morals," corrected Sam.

"I mean," retorted the deacon, angrily, "those who are worth considering."

Mr. Blake loved an argument, and being the only one present up to the deacon's mental calibre, he naturally was the one to make reply.

"I think that you are mistaken there, deacon," he said, quietly. "Here's Peter, he saw the performance, so did I, we were not shocked."

The deacon's face reddened.

"I — I meant — er — the — er — church people," he stammered.

"Yes, so I supposed," said Mr. Blake, "but there are people outside of the churches who have morals — morals capable of being shocked, too."

"I'll say just this much," replied the deacon. "That young woman did a dangerous thing. She has displeased many of our citizens —"

"And their wives," interposed Sam, but the deacon ignored the remark and continued:

"We cannot have such performances. The



young people will be corrupted, the moral tone of our town will fall to the level of the dust. Such a thing has never occurred before, and I sincerely trust never will again, notwithstanding the approbation of a few men who seem to have nothing else to talk about."


"There, deacon," said Mr. Blake, soothingly. "There's no use getting angry about it. Miss Wallace's costume was the same as thousands of other women have worn in public."

"That don't make it right," snapped the deacon.

"Nor wrong," retorted Mr. Blake.

"We'll see," said the deacon, as he drew on his mittens and started for the door. "We'll see when the school committee meets to-night what *they* think about it." There was a triumphant gleam in the deacon's eyes when he fired that shot, and while his audience was still in a stunned condition from the effect of it he went out.

The morning after, Mrs. Tweedie was still determined on her course, and Fanny's continued pleading did not move her. Barbara must go, and the angry, narrow-minded woman told her so and gave her reasons immediately after breakfast.



Barbara had expected to be insulted again, but to be turned out on such short notice was incomprehensible.

"You must go to-day," were Mrs. Tweedie's parting words as Barbara started for school. "To-day," Barbara repeated to herself as she went down the steps. On her way she wondered if it was really as bad as Mrs. Tweedie had said. What were others thinking and saying? Her duties that day were performed mechanically. Her heart was not in the work, and she was glad when school was over, though there was a perplexing task to be accomplished before the day was done.

Fanny called for her late in the afternoon, and they started toward home together.

"I've got all of your things together, Barbara," said Fanny, trying to speak cheerfully. "I thought — mother, you know — " Poor Fanny! it was impossible to explain, or smooth over her mother's conduct, and she burst into tears. Barbara understood, and instead of being comforted turned comforter herself.

"I know that you are my friend, Fanny," she said, as she linked arms with the sobbing girl.

"I am, indeed I am," sobbed Fanny. "I don't

care what they say, and I want to help you." She did not tell Barbara that she had spent hours that day in a fruitless search for a boarding-place for her.

"There," said Barbara, when they nearly had reached Mrs. Tweedie's, "don't feel badly any longer. I'll send for my things as soon as I find a place to stay. And don't worry, Fanny, about me, please, everything will come right I know." Fanny kissed her, regardless of whoever might be looking, and went home. Barbara hesitated a moment, and then walked toward the home of Doctor Jones. When Mrs. Jones came to the door in response to the bell she did not ask Barbara to come in.

"Really," she replied when Barbara made known her errand, "there's not a spare room in the house."

Of course Barbara understood, and was very sorry. She next called on Mrs. Blake, and received the same answer. Mrs. Thornton, Mrs. Darling, and Mrs. Browning all refused. No, they did not refuse, they made excuses — sugar-coated lies. Barbara was beginning to understand that Mrs. Tweedie was not the only one who had turned against her. Darkness had fallen without

as well as within. Trying to realize her position, Barbara walked slowly back toward the village. When near the parsonage she stopped, and looked up wistfully at the house and the stream of yellow light that shone down the path from a lamp in the parson's study. Then she looked across the street toward the church so black and still with the steeple rising toward the stars. Barbara hoped that in the parsonage she would find a friend with a kind word. She longed to run into the house and pour out the wretchedness in her aching heart to *his* mother; to talk of *him*, the one they both loved. Oh, how happy she could be under the roof that had sheltered *him*! She went to the door and knocked. Mrs. Flint came, but her answer was the same as the others, except that there were tears in her eyes when she bade Barbara good night. Mrs. Flint would have taken Barbara into her home and heart if she had dared, but her husband had paced his study floor all day, and was in a terrible mood. Once she had listened for a moment and heard him mutter: "The disgrace," and "My son — my son cares for such a woman!" He too had guessed Will's secret, and she knew that Barbara would not be welcome.

When Barbara left the parsonage she walked

aimlessly about the village for an hour. The wind came up blustering and cold; she began to feel faint, but could think of no other place to go. At last weariness overcame her, and hardly knowing where she was, she stopped and leaned against a gate-post to rest. Then a strange feeling came over her, she tried to resist it and turned to walk on, but staggered for a moment, and then fell.

After supper Mrs. Stout had gone into a neighbour's for a moment, and when she came scurrying back with a shawl drawn tightly over her head and shoulders, she tripped and almost fell over Barbara, who was lying in her gateway.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed, as she recovered her balance, and then knelt to see who it was. "If it ain't Miss Wallace!"

"Yes," Barbara murmured, as Mrs. Stout helped her to stand and led her into the house.

"You poor child," said Mrs. Stout, as she bustled about making Barbara comfortable on a couch before the sitting-room fire.

"I had walked a long way and was faint," murmured Barbara, trying to explain.

"You ain't had any supper?" asked Mrs. Stout, in surprise. Barbara smiled faintly, and

shook her head. "Haven't you been to Mis' Tweedie's since school?"

"I'm not staying there now," replied Barbara as she turned her face away and shuddered.

"You don't mean it!" Mrs. Stout was beginning to grasp the situation, and her surprise turned quickly to indignation. "She's put you out, that's what she's done, the mean old —"

"No, no," said Barbara, quickly, fearing that Fanny would be included in Mrs. Stout's wrath. "She told me this morning — I tried to find a place — I had plenty of time, but —"

"Nobody'd take you in," interrupted Mrs. Stout. "They was afraid they'd soil their goody-goody hands, I s'pose."

Barbara started to speak, then checked herself and covered her face with her hands. "No, you needn't say a word," Mrs. Stout continued, "I know what's been goin' on in this town to-day, and somebody besides you has got to suffer for it. Now you just lie there and I'll get you some-thin' to eat." Mrs. Stout went to the kitchen, and, after an absence of a few minutes, returned with a tempting lunch and a cup of hot tea. Barbara tried to eat, but failed despite Mrs. Stout's kindly intended urging, and dropped back wearily

on the couch. When Mrs. Stout started to remove the tray Barbara looked up at her appealingly.

"You'll let me stay to-night, won't you?" she said, in a choking voice.

"Stay, I guess you can if I have to make up a bed for Peter on the floor. Stay just as long as you can stand us," replied Mrs. Stout, earnestly. At that moment they heard Peter come in.

"Emmy," he called as he was taking off his coat in the hall.

"Yes," she replied.

"What do you s'pose that damned school committee done to-night?"

Barbara half-raised herself, her face was pale, and the tears glistened on her eyelashes. Mrs. Stout hurried to head Peter off, but was too late.

"They've discharged Miss Wallace, and —" he stopped abruptly when he came into the room and saw Barbara.

"Discharged!" repeated Barbara as though bewildered, and then she completely lost control of herself, and wept bitterly. Mrs. Stout knelt by her side, and tried to reassure and comfort her, but it was past midnight when Barbara ceased to moan, and asked if she could write a letter.

Mrs. Stout led the trembling girl to a desk, and assured her that Peter would mail the letter, if she wished him to, early the next morning.

Barbara wrote one line :

“ Will, I need you, come.

“ BARBARA.”



**Chapter XX****A Sermon**

---

ON the Sunday morning following the Morning Glory Club's entertainment, the Rev. Elijah Flint arose after a restless night feeling physically miserable; but thoughts of the mighty effort that he was to make that day caused him soon to forget his bodily condition. Mrs. Flint had gone out of town the day before to visit friends. The minister was alone in the parsonage — alone with a narrow, stubborn idea. After a meagre breakfast of his own getting, he started early for church, eager and impatient for the service to begin.

A rumour had spread about town that Mr. Flint was to depart from his usual custom on that day and preach an up-to-date sermon. Everybody knew what that meant, and everybody — almost — went to church. When Mr. Flint went into the pulpit, and turned the leaves of the large Bible in search of the morning lesson, he glanced over the large congregation with the keenest satisfaction. It never occurred to him that the addition to his small flock was made up of victims of morbid curiosity. The idea crept into his mind that his

opposition to a recent "ungodly performance" had brought favour to him and his church, which before had been denied them. At last, he thought, after years of unrewarded, unappreciated labour, the tide has turned. Poor fool; if "narrowness" and "curiosity" had been painted all over his church in letters as tall as himself, God could not have grieved more.

When Mr. Flint arose to deliver his sermon the stillness of a tomb fell over devout and curious alike, and was preserved to the end. The sermon was a general denunciation of the stage, professional and amateur, the latter being especially stigmatized. And in reference to a recent local performance, and the enormity of the sin of an unnamed young woman who wore in public an undescribed costume, the preacher was unscathingly bitter and quoted these words: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion." Thus, for an hour, the man raved like one insane, and during that time many of his hearers became infected with the same malady. They believed every idea that was hurled at them, swallowed words whole without tasting to discover whether they were sweet or poison. The accuser's vehemence surprised some

and grieved others, but none of the curious were disappointed.

Barbara sat at one of Mrs. Stout's front windows, thoughtful and silent, as she watched the people going home from church. Without, the sun was shining brightly; within, the leaden cloud still hung over her and grew darker without her knowing it. The last cruel blow could not be anticipated.

Mrs. Stout had been motherly kindness itself. She had tried in every way to lessen the sting of the outrage — to make Barbara forget; but the rough, good-hearted woman failed, though her efforts were gratefully appreciated. She had urged Barbara to go home, well knowing that Manville must be unbearable, but Barbara was waiting for Will. He had telegraphed that he would come as soon as possible, but two days had gone by since then. Oh, how she longed to see him! He was the only one who could comfort and help, and though she did not know how that even he could silence the mischievous and careless tongues, she had faith to believe that he would.

Have I done wrong? She asked herself a thousand times, and each time the answer was "no." Would Will think that she had sinned? The

thought was torture, but Love and Faith answered the question for her.

Late that afternoon Fanny Tweedie called, and a few minutes afterward Mrs. Stout excused herself, and went out wearing a sterner and more determined look than her usually jovial countenance was accustomed to. Fanny and Barbara talked girl-fashion for an hour. There was some laughter, and many tears, but both felt better for it, and the seal of their friendship was made secure. Fanny had brought a verbal message from her father that pleased Barbara, and cheered her greatly. Poor Ezra, he had been fond of her always, and now that she was in such dire need of friends he longed to help her, but Mrs. T. stood between him and everything — a human, female barrier.

"Is he coming?" Fanny asked, after a long pause in the conversation.

"Will?"

"Yes, of course, there's no other *he*, is there?"

"I have written him to come," Barbara replied.

"Does he know what has — happened?" said Fanny. Barbara shook her head. Will did not know exactly what had happened, but he was sure that something had gone wrong, and at that moment was speeding toward her in response to

her tear-stained appeal. "Well," continued Fanny, "I'm sorry for some folks when he does find out."

Mrs. Stout would not go to Mr. Flint's church out of curiosity, or for any other reason, but she had heard a true report of that morning's sermon, and was filled to the bursting point with anger. She thought it best to keep the news from Barbara, however, and cautioned Fanny not to mention it. But a vent for her feelings she must find, and it was for that purpose that she had gone out. She had no definite plan in mind, but almost unconsciously walked toward the parsonage. Upon reaching the gate she stopped. The house was dark. How she hated it, and the man who lived there. Sometime, possibly, she might forgive the women who had refused to shelter Barbara, and perhaps the school committee, but the minister who had denounced her in the house of God she could never forgive. With such thoughts in her mind Mrs. Stout went up the path to the door and rang the bell vigorously. It seemed a long time before the door was finally opened by Mr. Flint, who held the lamp high in order that he could better see his visitor. Mrs. Stout noticed that his face was flushed, and that his eyes were unnaturally bright.

“ Good evenin’, Mr. Flint,” she said, coldly.

“ Oh, it is Mrs. Stout? ” he replied when he heard her voice.

“ Yes.”

“ Won’t you come in? ”

“ No, thanks, I can say what I’ve got to right here.”

Mr. Flint placed the lamp on a table. His hand trembled, and as he turned he staggered, but caught and steadied himself by grasping the door-knob.

“ I’ve come,” Mrs. Stout began, “ to say some-thin’ that won’t do any good, prob’ly, but I want to be sure that you don’t think that everybody in Manville has got the same ideas as you about some things in pertic’ler.”

“ I have never entertained that idea,” replied the parson.

“ Perhaps not, but you might have.” Mrs. Stout hesitated for a moment, and then her anger broke forth. “ Mr. Flint, you made a big mistake this mornin’. You said everything that you could say to spoil the good name of one of the best women that ever lived. She never did you, or anybody else, any harm, but you and all the rest seem bound to drive her away with as black a

name as you can give her. The women folks wa'n't satisfied with kickin' her out of their houses, they must get the school committee to discharge her. And then you, a man that is s'posed to show folks how to live right, and believe in God, spend a whole Sunday mornin' runnin' her down." Mrs. Stout stopped because she was out of breath.

"My dear Mrs. Stout," the parson replied, "it is not the woman that I am opposed to, but the principles involved and violated, the morals offended and endangered. Those susceptible to corruption who —"

"Corruption!" snapped Mrs. Stout. "Do you mean to say that she could corrupt anybody in any costume?"

"Well — er — the — er — minds of the young —"

"The young, yes; but how about all those women, most of 'em belonged to your church too, that wore such corruption clothes when they all had bicycles, and the fever was at its worst?"

"Exercise, Mrs. Stout, excuses —"


"Exercise fiddlesticks! You've got the wrong idea, Mr. Flint, and for that reason I s'pose you've

done more'n anybody else to disgrace a good woman — the one that your son cares more about than — ”

“ Stop! ” cried the parson, feebly, as he raised his hand protestingly.

“ I will stop, because I ain't sure about that. But I must say this much, that I hope you'll live long enough to repent, though from what I've heard, and know about you, you'll have to live to be a hundred. Good night.” Mrs. Stout turned as abruptly as she had spoken, walked down the path and up the road toward the home of Mr. George, the chairman of the school committee. Mr. Flint closed the door, returned to his study, and sank wearily into a chair. Sick though he was, Mrs. Stout had made him realize that there was another side to the question, and he asked himself repeatedly, as Barbara had been doing, have I done wrong? And the answer was the same. No; he had performed his duty as he saw it — man can do no more than that and serve God. But the view-point, there is always more than one, and then his mind wandered to the women on the bicycles.

Mr. George was at home when Mrs. Stout called, and was delighted to see her. He asked





her to come in, and she accepted the invitation. She afterward explained, when relating the story to Peter, that "I wouldn't have gone in only I had so much to say, and Mr. George is so bald I didn't want him to catch cold and die, and then be called a murderer by his wife."

"Rather unusual to see you on a Sunday evening," said Mr. George, cheerfully, when Mrs. Stout was comfortably seated.

"It's an unusual case," she replied, stiffly.

Mr. George raised his eyebrows, and then frowned.

"Indeed," he replied, a little perplexed.

"Don't you think that the school committee was in an awful big hurry about dischargin' Miss Wallace?" asked Mrs. Stout, coming to the point at once.

"Hem — er — I don't know — I — "

"Well, if you don't, who does?"

"Oh, — er — well, of course I understand the case, if that is what you mean. I assure you that it was gone over very thoroughly."

"There ain't no doubt about that," replied Mrs. Stout, with sarcasm. "It's been gone over too thoroughly by everybody. Now what I want to know is, if Miss Wallace tried to get another

place somewhere else she'd have to tell where she'd been before, wouldn't she? "

" Yes."

" And they'd write to you, wouldn't they, about what kind of a woman she was, and so forth? "

" It is customary."

" And you'd write back, and tell 'em exactly how she happened to leave Manville, wouldn't you? "

" I should consider it my duty to state the truth." Mr. George was getting uneasy.

" And she wouldn't get the place."

" Hem — probably not."

" Pretty hard for a woman that's got to earn a livin'. It ain't too late for the school committee to take back what it's done, is it? " Mrs. Stout continued earnestly.

" No; but — "

" You won't do it. *Now* I'm comin' to what I've got to say. You discharged Miss Wallace without any good reason. You — "

" Mrs. Stout, I protest," interrupted Mr. George. " There was a reason, and you know it as well as I do. Her costume at your club's entertainment was — "

" Be careful," warned Mrs. Stout.

"It is my custom," replied the committeeman, testily, "to speak with caution of one woman to — another woman."

"If you'd be as considerate when talkin' to men about one woman in pertic'ler there wouldn't have been any need of my comin' here to-night."

"Yes — hem — well, as I was about to say, she was — er — indiscreet," stammered Mr. George.

"That's what they all say," said Mrs. Stout, scornfully. "I s'pose it would have been all right if she'd worn a bathin'-suit. If Miss Wallace was indiscreet, what would you call your two girls when they went in bathin' down to Horse Shoe Beach last summer at the Sunday-school picnic before half the folks in Manville? Miss Wallace's costume wa'n't half as indiscreet as a wet bathin' suit is."

"Custom, Mrs. Stout, excuses many things," replied Mr. George, his face very red.

"Custom is often a mean excuse for not doin' right," retorted Mrs. Stout. "Because it's been the custom since the year one for men to get drunk, and women's tongues to wag about other folkses business, does that make it right?"

Mr. George was silenced — completely out of

action, and sat staring at his inquisitor, wondering what would come next.

“Mr. George,” Mrs. Stout continued, “I’m goin’ into politics next fall. The law of this State only lets a woman vote for school committee, but in this case that’s enough. That’s all I’ve got to say, I guess, just now. If you should make up your mind to take Miss Wallace back I wish you’d let me know.” With a glance of contempt at the man before her, Mrs. Stout left her chair, and started for the door. Mr. George followed, mechanically opened the door, and when she had gone out, closed it softly.

Mrs. Stout felt relieved, but not satisfied, after the two calls that she had made, and as she walked slowly homeward, planned the campaign that was to defeat Mr. George and his colleagues at the next election. But her dreams of political victory were quickly dispelled when she reached home. Barbara and Fanny were in tears.

“Well, well, what’s happened now?” she asked.

“I—I told her about the sermon,” sobbed Fanny. “But I didn’t intend to, really I didn’t, Mrs. Stout.”

“Well, she’d better hear it from her friends

than somebody else," said Mrs. Stout, soothingly. "Secrets never do any good, anyway."

"I ought to know it," said Barbara. "Oh, what a wicked, wicked woman they think I am!" she moaned.

"But you're not, indeed you're not," cried Fanny as she impulsively threw her arms about Barbara and kissed her.

"There, there," said Mrs. Stout, "cryin' won't help — hark!" Some one ran up the steps, and set the door-bell to jingling furiously.

"Goodness! who can that be?" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, as she started for the door. Barbara sprang to her feet. Her hair was disarranged, her cheeks were wet with tears, there was a look of longing in her eyes, and on her lips trembled a smile.

"Why, Willie Flint!" they heard Mrs. Stout exclaim. Barbara did not move, but Fanny tiptoed from the room. There was a heavy step in the hall. At the sound Barbara took a step forward.

"Will, Will!" she cried, as he came into the room.

In a moment his arms were about her, and then some one closed the door softly.

"Did I do wrong, Will?" Barbara asked an hour later when she had finished the story of the past week, omitting only the miserable part that his father had played.

"No, Barbara," he replied, and she was satisfied. But Will was not satisfied. He had walked up from the station with some one who had told him of his father's sermon, not knowing that Barbara was more to him than an acquaintance.

"And father, what has he done?" he asked, gravely.

Barbara looked up quickly, started to reply, but Will continued before the words came.

"Do *you* know what he did to-day?"

"Yes," replied Barbara, faintly, "but —"

"And mother, have you seen her?" (What would she not have given to spare him that?) "Why did you not go to her?" Will was determined to know all.

"I — I did," Barbara faltered.

"When?"

"Will, dear, please don't ask me. I'm sure that she would have helped me if —"

"She refused to take you in?"

"Yes, but Will, don't judge them, please. I am

sure that your father thought he was doing right and — ”

“ Yet he preaches of Christ.”

“ Will ! ”

“ God seems to have forgotten Manville,” he said, bitterly.

“ No, Will, he is only showing us the way — and the others too.”

“ How can you say that, Barbara, when they’ve taken everything from you, position, name — ”

“ Everything but you, Will,” she interposed, lovingly. It was growing late, the lamp was burning low and sputtering. Mrs. Stout knocked at the door, and to Will’s response came into the room.

“ Excuse *me*,” she said, “ but I forgot to fill that lamp to-day, and — ”

“ All right, Mrs. Stout,” Will laughingly interrupted, “ I understand, I’m going in a moment.”

“ ’Deed you ain’t goin’ a step,” replied Mrs. Stout, determinedly. “ I’ve got a room all fixed for you, and I don’t want to hear one identical word about *not* stayin’.”

While Mrs. Stout went for another lamp, there was time for Barbara to give Will the answer that he had striven for — and won.

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**Chapter XXXI**  
**An Angel of Mercy**

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EARLY the next morning Will started for the parsonage. On the way he wondered if misunderstanding and contention would stand between him and his father now, as it had in the past, even though a woman's name was in the balance.

On arriving at the house and attempting to open the door, Will discovered that he did not have his keys with him. He rang the bell, but no one answered. A second and a third ring in rapid succession proved equally unsuccessful. Then he went to the back door and knocked heavily—still no response. On the way back to the front door he looked in at a window, but could see no one. Will was surprised and disappointed. He knew of his mother's absence, but could not understand why his father was not there at that time in the morning. He gave the front door-bell a final ring, waited several minutes, and then started off toward the home of school committeeman George.

As he was passing Stout's Grocery, Sam Billings, who was standing in the doorway, waved his hand and called:



"Hello, Billy."

"Hello, Sam," Will replied without stopping.

"I thought you'd be 'round here 'fore long. Lively times," Sam shouted, but Will made no reply. He met many friends and acquaintances that day who looked curiously at him as he greeted them and hastened by. He had no inclination for idle talk, nor time; there being so much serious work to be done, and only a day for its accomplishment, as it was necessary for him to return to the city that night.

When Will walked into Mr. George's office that morning, that gentleman had not fully recovered from the effects of Mrs. Stout's visit of the night before. And when Will had concluded his remarks he felt about as mean and frightened as a narrow-minded man can feel.

Will called next on the other members of the school committee, the editor of the local paper, in which much had been insinuated concerning Barbara, and the deacons of his father's church. At noon he returned to Mrs. Stout's, and when Barbara asked him where he had been, smilingly replied, "Calling on our friends."

In the afternoon Will gave his time and attention to the prominent ladies of the town, — Mrs. Twee-

die, Mrs. Blake, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Darling, and several others. He was extremely courteous to the ladies, but when he had finished, many of them knew what he would have said, and how he would have said it, if they had happened to be men.

Toward night, when on his way back to Mrs. Stout's, Will stopped again at the parsonage, and found it, as in the morning, apparently deserted, and concluded that his father had gone away for the day, perhaps to join his mother.

"Well," said Mrs. Stout as she opened the door for him, "feel any better?"

"Yes; but I doubt if I've done Barbara any good," he replied.

"It's satisfyin', though, to tell folks what you think of 'em," chuckled Mrs. Stout.

Will laughed, and went to meet Barbara.

"Been scolding all the afternoon?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Whom?"

Will named the ladies on whom he had called. Mrs. Stout was greatly pleased, especially when he spoke of Mrs. Tweedie, but Barbara looked grave.

"What did you say to them, Will?" she asked when he had finished.

"Something that they will never forget," he replied.

"And what did they say to you?" asked Mrs. Stout, curiously.

"Everything except the right thing."

"Made all kinds of excuses, I s'pose, but just wait till the next meetin' of the club; if I don't make a speech that'll make 'em feel like a piece of worn-out carpet, it'll be because I'm struck dumb before I get a chance," said Mrs. Stout, vigorously, and then started for the kitchen to get supper.

"Have you seen your father, Will?" Barbara asked a moment later.

"No; but I have been to the house twice. Perhaps it is best. I hope to be in a better mood when I come down next week."

"When you do see him, please try to forget me, just think of him, and speak to him as your father."

"If you wish —"

"No, Will, because it is right — for your own sake," she pleaded, and he promised.

Between supper and train-time there was an opportunity for Barbara and Will to make again the vows of lovers. They forgot the time, the train — everything except each other; but, for-

tunately, Mrs. Stout did not, and when the time came, warned them that further delay was out of the question by coughing just outside the door, with an effort that was ridiculous, and asking them if they knew what time it was. Barbara, who was to accompany Will to the railroad station, ran to put on her things, and Will called to Mrs. Stout to come in, which she did.

“ I can’t thank you enough for your kindness,” said Will, grasping her hand. “ If it hadn’t been for you, I don’t know what Barbara would have done.”

“ Oh, nonsense, I guess somebody’d come along if I hadn’t,” replied Mrs. Stout.

“ But she had been to several somebodies.”

“ Well, I don’t see how I could have done any different,” said Mrs. Stout, modestly.

“ Bless you for it, Mrs. Stout, I can never forget.”

“ Bless you again, and again,” added Barbara, who came into the room at that moment, and emphasized her blessing with a kiss on Mrs. Stout’s red, fat cheek. As they were going down the steps, Will turned and called, “ Good-bye.”

“ Good-bye,” came a yell from three lusty young throats.

“ Good-bye, boys,” laughed Will, with a wave of his hand to the three youngsters, who had stolen unawares into the hall behind their mother.

“ You scamps ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Stout, as she shut the door, and “ shooed ” them back upstairs.

For a moment Barbara and Will were silent.

It was a beautifully still night, the air was clear and cold — just such a night as the one on which the sleigh-ride accident had occurred, but so much had happened since then that neither thought of it.

“ When are you going home, Barbara ? ” Will asked, suddenly.

“ Very soon, in a day or two, probably.”

“ And when — when shall we be — ” Will hesitated. “ Married ” is a difficult word to speak sometimes, but it came after a moment, and manfully.

“ I am ready, Will, when you are,” Barbara replied. At that moment they heard the pounding of a horse’s hoofs, and the sound of sleigh-bells, coming furiously toward them. They stopped to listen, and as the sound came nearer, Will, thinking that it was a runaway, started into the road, but Barbara clung to his arm and held him back.

Love is selfish sometimes, and has a right to be. As the team rushed by, they saw that it was Doctor Jones.

“A race — perhaps with death,” said Will, as they walked on. Barbara shuddered.

The train was late, and while waiting, Barbara and Will slowly paced the dimly lighted platform. When at last the warning shriek of the engine on the approaching train came through the still night air, they stopped in their walk, and with clasped hands watched the glaring headlight as it rapidly neared them. The station-master, lantern in hand, emerged from his warm office and shivered when he felt the cold air, but he did not see the man and woman who stood near.

“Have courage,” said Will, as the train stopped.

“And faith,” Barbara whispered, as he turned to leave her. A moment more and he was gone. She watched until the red lights on the rear of the train had disappeared, then slowly walked toward Mrs. Stout’s. In returning she went by a different road, one that would take her by the parsonage. The way was lonely, but she did not notice, and deserted until she approached the home of Mr. Flint, with the black church looming across the

way. A horse and sleigh were standing by the side of the road, and near the gate two men, one with a red lantern, were talking earnestly. As Barbara drew nearer she saw that the red light had been improvised by tying a red handkerchief around an ordinary lantern, and recognized the men by their voices as Doctor Jones and Sam Billings.

"I can't find a man or a woman who will come," she heard the doctor say.

"He's a mighty sick man, and —" said Sam, but Barbara interrupted him.

"Who?" she asked. The two men had not heard her approach, and when she spoke they were startled and instinctively stepped back. Barbara misunderstood their action, and a feeling of bitter resentment arose within her, as she started to hasten by.

"Oh, is it Miss Wallace?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," Barbara replied.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Wallace," said the doctor, quickly, "it is not you of whom we are afraid, but Mr. Flint is dangerously ill, and has been lying in his study unattended since yesterday; Sam, here, made the discovery to-night. Mrs. Flint is away. I sent for her, but received word

that she is sick too, and I can't find any one to take care of him. Has Will gone?"

"Yes; but what is the — what is Mr. Flint's trouble?" Barbara asked, and looked wonderingly at the red lantern.

The doctor knew that Barbara's courage was good, he remembered how fearlessly she had worked during the epidemic of diphtheria, early in the winter, yet he hesitated now before answering her question.

"Why don't you tell me?" said Barbara, impatiently. "What is it?"

"Smallpox," replied the doctor.

It was Barbara's turn to shrink from them.

"And no one to nurse him?" she asked.

"No; and that is what he needs more than anything else," said the doctor.

"There must be some one — are they afraid?"

"Naturally."

"But if you cannot get some one —"

"His chance for life is nothing."

"He must not lie there alone and suffer!" Barbara cried, as the horror of the situation became more deeply impressed on her mind. The three were silent for a moment. Each was trying



to think of some one who was competent, and willing to do the work.

"I know who will do it," said Barbara, suddenly.

"Who?" the doctor asked, eagerly.

"I will," Barbara calmly replied.

"No!" exclaimed the doctor and Sam together.

"I must," she replied, firmly.

"But you have been worried, you are in no condition to undertake such work," the doctor pleaded. "Think of the risk, and the work, day and night for days, perhaps weeks."

"Will it be any harder to bear than what I have already borne?" she asked. The men were silent. "Please send word to Mrs. Stout, and — I will go in now." She turned to go, but stopped when the doctor spoke.

"You may save him, but you will sacrifice yourself. Why should you do that for the man who —"

"Please, doctor, do not remind me of what he has done — I have tried to forget."

"Pardon me," said the doctor, who saw that she was determined. "Sam will be here outside to get anything that you may need. I shall call in the morning."

Barbara walked up the path to the door of the parsonage. The two men watched, and, accustomed as the doctor was to scenes of suffering, sacrifice and death, there were tears in his eyes.

"She's an angel," muttered Sam.

"Courage, faith," was Barbara's whispered prayer as she opened the door of the pest-stricken house and went in.

**Chapter XXXI****Many Minds Change**

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THE next morning the people of Manville had something really new and startling to talk about. When it first became known that Mr. Flint had been stricken with that most dreaded and loathsome disease, smallpox, everybody tried to remember the most recent time that they had been near him. Many who had attended his church on the previous Sunday felt that they were doomed. Others equally superstitious thought that they and Mr. Flint were to be punished in this way by a wrathful God for the persecution of an innocent woman. All sorts of crazy, silly talk was indulged in, but through it all Barbara's praises were sung, though few seemed to understand fully why she had sacrificed herself. Their minds were too narrow, their world too small, to appreciate such service.

The red flag by day, the lantern by night, and Sam Billings all the time on the steps of the parsonage, were objects of curious interest. Many went far out of their way in order to pass by — on the opposite side — and Sam was kept busy all day yelling answers to volleys of questions. But

he was equal to the task and enjoyed it. For the time being he was the only person in town of any consequence, the centre of all interest, the only one to answer questions, and he was being paid for it.

At Stout's Grocery, the proprietor, Alick Purbeck, and undertaker Blake were loud and sincere in their praise of Barbara.

"She's the right kind," said Alick, enthusiastically.

"There's not a woman in town her equal," added Mr. Blake.

"Right," said Peter, "exceptin' —"

"Of course, exceptin' —" Alick smiled.

"Excepting our own beloved," Mr. Blake finished for them.

"What are the chances of the smallpox spreadin', Mr. Blake?" asked Alick.

At the suggestion of an epidemic, the undertaker unconsciously rubbed his hands together in a businesslike manner.

"Can't tell yet," he replied. "I have no idea where Mr. Flint got it. This part of the country has been remarkably free from it this winter. Perhaps there won't be another case."

"I hope not," said Alick. "If Mr. Flint gets

well, he'll have to take back some things that he's said, won't he? "

" And some other folks, too," added Peter.

" They're beginning to change their minds, already," Alick continued. " Half a dozen women told me this mornin' that all this fuss has been about somethin' that wa'n't half as bad as 'twas made out to be; and I told 'em that some folks did change their minds about as often as they opened their mouths."

" Did you say that to customers? " asked Peter, who always had an eye and ear to business; but at that moment, Mr. George, the school committeeman, came in, and temporarily saved the talkative clerk from the censure that he justly deserved.

" Mornin', Mr. George," said Alick, who was grateful for his timely appearance. Peter grunted some unintelligible greeting, while Mr. Blake bowed stiffly and turned away. Alick wanted to make Mr. George uncomfortable as soon as possible, and came to the point at once, by asking, " Hear the news? "

" News, what news? " queried Mr. George.

Alick was something of an actor, and to further perplex the school committeeman, dropped the

measure of potatoes that he was holding, and stared at him in astonishment.

"You ain't heard!" he gasped, after a pause of appropriate length.

"If you've got anything to say — say it," snapped Mr. George, impatiently.

"Mr. Flint —" Alick began, but Mr. George interrupted him.

"Not dead!" he exclaimed, as he turned toward the undertaker, and a look of dread spread over his face.

"No," replied Alick, slowly, "at least he wa'n't the last I heard, but —"

"Out with it, tell me!" demanded Mr. George.

"He's got the smallpox," said Alick, quietly.

Mr. George was wholly unprepared for the shock. His nerves had been so seriously irritated of late, that the distressing news concerning his beloved pastor almost unmanned him. Without giving his victim time to recover, Alick continued:

"But that ain't the best part of it."

"The best part of it!" repeated Mr. George, in amazement. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean," said Alick, gleefully, "that they couldn't get anybody to take care of him until Miss Barbara Wallace came along, and, without

being asked, took her life in her hands and stepped in where nobody else *dared* to go."

If Alick had struck him in the face, Mr. George could not have been more surprised. "You see," Alick went on, "there's *somethin'* good about her, after all."

"No doubt — no doubt," coughed Mr. George, in a dazed sort of way. "I must look into the matter. Very commendable, certainly." With that he backed out of the store.

"The old hard-shelled stiff-back," muttered Alick, as he shook his fist in the direction of the door.

"You've given him something to think about," said Mr. Blake.

As Mr. George walked toward the home of Mr. Flint, he summed up his chances for reëlection, and found them very slim. When he arrived at the parsonage, or, rather, the farthest point from it to which he thought Sam Billings's voice would carry, he stopped and gazed upon the modest dwelling and its gaudy decoration. Sam spied him, and hailed him gleefully. Mr. George asked for details, and got them wonderfully elaborated by Sam's imaginative mind.

When Sam had finished his story he began

asking impertinent questions — questions that made the school committee-man's conscience turn somersaults as he walked quickly away. Later in the day he drove about town, and notified the members of the school committee that there would be a special meeting that evening.

That afternoon there was an especially-special meeting of the Morning Glory Club, at the home of Mrs. Blake. The club-women knew that the meeting had been called for the purpose of expelling Barbara Wallace from the club, and to take some action in regard to making public the fact that the club was not in any way responsible for the costume that she had worn in the theatricals, and many other harsh and terrible, though very indefinite things, but Barbara had unknowingly frustrated their plans.

A moment after the members had been called to order, a motion to adjourn was made and carried, and then they settled themselves for a delightful afternoon talking it over. Mrs. Tweedie appeared to be deeply affected by Barbara's brave act. "We may have misjudged Miss Wallace," she admitted, and then she talked about "atonement" and many other things about which



none of us know but little. She tried to explain why she had turned Barbara out by admitting that she was vexed at the time, and only had meant that she expected her to find another boarding-place as soon as possible. "Indeed, how could I do otherwise in view of the unpleasant circumstances? And when she did not return that night at the usual time, no one could imagine my surprise."

"And I have no doubt," said Mrs. Jones, when Mrs. Tweedie had said all that she could to put herself on the right side, "not the slightest, but that Miss Wallace misunderstood me. Of course, I was not wholly in sympathy with her, but I really would not have refused, had I a room to spare." Mrs. Jones wiped away two tears which opportunely came to her eyes, caused, however, not by an excess of emotion, but by a cold in her head.

"True," replied Mrs. Tweedie, "we all have been cruelly misquoted, misunderstood, and misjudged."

Poor Mrs. Tweedie; poor, unfortunate Morning Glories. Now that Barbara must be vindicated, they wanted to pose as martyrs themselves.

"Did Mr. Flint — Will Flint I mean — call

on any of you ladies yesterday?" asked Mrs. Thornton, after all had explained, to their own satisfaction, why they had treated Barbara as they had.

An impressive silence followed. Mrs. Stout snickered, despite her determination to hold her peace until the others were talked out.

"Really," began Miss Sawyer, "I must confess that he called on me." Upon that others admitted that they, too, had been honoured.

"What did he say to you, Miss Sawyer?" asked Mrs. Darling, eagerly.

"He said a great deal, and was very much in earnest. He has changed greatly since I last —"

"Yes, indeed he has," interrupted Mrs. Thornton. "He's quite good-looking now."

"And," continued Miss Sawyer, "he spoke of the honour of a woman as being the most sacred thing, and — oh, he said so much in such a short time, and was so gentlemanly, that one could forgive him for saying anything." Miss Sawyer spoke rapidly, and when she had finished was blushing crimson.

"Oh!" exclaimed the ladies in chorus, and then they laughed at Miss Sawyer's discomfiture.

"He *did* make an impression on you, Miss Saw-

yer," simpered Mrs. Darling. "And was he as agreeable to you, Mrs. Tweedie?" the shallow young matron asked, meaningly, as she smiled on "the powerful." Mrs. Tweedie looked uncomfortable.

"The young man called," she replied, solemnly, "but our conversation was of a confidential nature."

No one ever knew just what Will did say to Mrs. Tweedie, but some guessed that his remarks to her were made more after the manner of the "*other sex*" than they were to the other women.

"I have heard," said Mrs. Blake, after a lull in the conversation, "that he was very violent with Mr. George."

"Oh, yes," piped Mrs. Browning, "he struck him, and threatened to shoot him if he didn't have Miss Wallace reinstated."

"And I haven't a doubt but what he'd do it," said Mrs. Thornton.

"I wonder if they're really engaged. Has anybody heard?" asked Mrs. Darling, who loved the affairs of lovers almost as much as she loved herself.

"Why don't you ask one of 'em?" said Mrs.

Stout, abruptly. "That's about the only thing that any of you don't seem to be sure about."

Mrs. Darling's cheeks flushed slightly, but she wisely refrained from replying. "Perhaps some of you have noticed that I ain't said much to-day," continued Mrs. Stout, "and I want to tell you that one reason is because I've learned a lesson about talkin' too much from the woman that you've been talkin' about. But there's one or two things that I've just got to say. There's been a lot said about bein' misunderstood, and such. What was said about Miss Wallace was plain enough when it was said. What was done — was done; but there ain't one woman, not a livin' one, that's said, or done, one thing to make good the harm they've done her — except to stop sayin' bad things. That's somethin', but it ain't enough; now she's tryin' to save the life of the man that did more than anybody else to take away her good name, and riskin' her own life doin' it. You all know better than you did before what kind of a woman she is. Now, I ain't goin' to say all of the hard things that I was goin' to say, and wanted to say, but what I want to know is, what are we, this club, goin' to do to show her that we made a mistake and are sorry,

and by doin' it show everybody that we ain't a set of mean, narrow-minded women? "

"What would you suggest?" Mrs. Tweedie calmly asked.

"Well," replied Mrs. Stout, "we can never pay her in any way for the wrong that's been done her, but we can show her that we'd like to. I move that we send a letter to the school committee, and every mother's son of us sign it, askin' them to give Miss Wallace back her school, and say that we know her to be a woman with a character as good as anybody's, and better than most folks, and that we believe she's been in the right in everything that she's said or done since we've known her. If the motion don't go, it's more'n likely that I shall forget my good resolution about not sayin' things." Mrs. Stout sat down, utterly out of breath, and mopped her face while a slight murmur of surprise ran about the room. The motion was seconded, and the question put without debate.

"It is a unanimous vote," Mrs. Tweedie announced. Mrs. Stout smiled. She well knew that some of them hated to do it, but they wanted to be on the popular side, and this time it happened to be right.

“Well,” she said, quizzically, as she looked about at the comically sad-faced women, “I must say that you’re the glumist lookin’ lot of mornin’ glories I ever see.”

**Chapter XXXIII****Coals of Fire**

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BARBARA'S new task as nurse and housekeeper at the parsonage was not an easy one, but after the second day she had everything in good order — everything except her patient. For him there was little hope — Barbara knew, and Mr. Flint himself knew.

When the minister first saw her after he had been lying alone for hours his only thought was that she had come to demand something. He had publicly denounced her; she had been turned away from his door; what could she have come for except revenge?

"I have come to take care of you, Mr. Flint," was all that she had said, but it was enough to reassure him.

Barbara's work had taken her into all of the rooms in the house in search of one thing or another. The first day she had opened the door of *his* room — Will's. She had only taken a step when she discovered whose room it was, and knew that what she was looking for would not be found there. She could not resist the temptation, however, to glance about the room. There were his

books, and his fishing-rods and tackle; his shotgun stood in a corner, and near a window was an old-fashioned writing-table. It was a boy's room — *his* room. Barbara feasted her eyes for a moment, and then, remembering her patient, stepped back into the hall, and softly closed the door.

Hanging on the wall, opposite the foot of Mr. Flint's bed, in an oval frame of black walnut, was a photograph of Will. The picture was a likeness of a sturdy little chap of three, with large, staring eyes, fat cheeks, and long curls. Barbara looked at it often; Mr. Flint, too, often looked at the picture, but only when Barbara was not in the room, — while she was there his eyes followed her constantly. There was something about her, and what she was doing for him, that he, in his condition, could not understand. They talked but little. Once Mr. Flint began to speak of his notorious sermon, but Barbara quickly stopped him.

Sam Billings had been hired by the board of health to maintain quarantine on the parsonage, though the fear of the people of Manville made it almost unnecessary except for the sake of appearances. The weather was mild, and when not engaged in a noisy conversation with some one



across the road, Sam sat on the steps, or paced the path to the gate. Through Sam and Doctor Jones was the only means Barbara had of communicating with the world, but just then she had little use for the world or many in it. Sam afforded her some amusement, however, when she went to the door for a breath of fresh air.

"I tell you, Miss Wallace," he said, one morning, "folks have changed their minds about you."

"That is a right we all have," Barbara smilingly replied.

"They all think that you're a heroine now."

"I am sure of one good friend in you, Mr. Billings." The "Mr." pleased Sam greatly — it was seldom used as a prefix to his name.

"You're jest right about that," Sam grinned. He liked Barbara and her smile immensely. When she had gone in and closed the door he reflected that, if he were younger, and knew more, and had a steady job, and Billy Flint was not in love with her and she with him, why, he would put *his* best foot forward.

"Has any word come from Will?" Mr. Flint asked, on the afternoon of the second day.

"No," Barbara replied; "but I know that we shall hear to-day."

The sick man turned restlessly.

"I must see him," he moaned; "there is something that I must say to him, and to you — Barbara." He hesitated before speaking her name — it was the first time he had called her that.

"But, Mr. Flint," remonstrated Barbara, in alarm, "he cannot come here, he must not put himself in danger; besides, there will be plenty of time when you are well again."

"That time may not come. I must tell him before it is too late."

"But not at the risk of his life. Is not his life more to you — and to me — than our own?"

"Yes," was the feeble reply, and then he muttered: "My miserable life."

"There," said Barbara, soothingly, "we have talked more than is for your good." She started to leave the room, but he held out his hand appealingly.

"Wait," he said. "If I cannot tell him I must say it to you. I have guessed the secret, yours and Will's. It was that more than anything else that made me preach as I did. From childhood to manhood I fear I have wronged him. I was narrow — blind. I have wronged you, too, and yet you came to save me. For Will's sake forgive

me, Barbara, and if I never see him again tell him that I lived to realize my sin, tell him that I have suffered — ” The minister stopped abruptly and listened. There was a quick step in the hall below. Barbara turned quickly toward the door, and Mr. Flint dropped his outstretched hand. Some one was running up the stairs. Barbara half-guessed the truth and was transfixed with horror.

“ Will ! ” she screamed, as he appeared in the doorway. “ Don’t come in — go quick — think of the danger ! ”

Mr. Flint had half-raised himself, and was staring at his son with a look of agony on his face.

“ In God’s name, Will, go ! Your life — ”

Will calmly raised his hand as though to command silence.

“ Danger, my life ? ” he said, and then smiled as he took Barbara’s hands in his own. “ Your life is my life, Barbara.”

“ And mine,” groaned the sick man.

“ Yes, and yours, father,” replied Will, as he went to the bed and looked into his father’s eyes.

“ I’m sorry to find you this way, but I have good news of mother. She is better, except for worrying about you and wanting to come.” A sob from

Barbara caused Will to turn quickly and clasp her in his arms, and as he wiped away the tears and kissed her, he saw the worry and work written on her face.

"I have come to help, Barbara," he said. She understood and blessed him for it, but until all danger was passed she prayed unceasingly for his safety.

That evening Sam Billings was dozing on the front steps when Will opened the door without thinking that Sam was not aware of his presence in the parsonage.

"Hello, Sam," he said.

Sam was so startled that he almost fell down the steps. When he had recovered his balance he stood up, rubbed his eyes, and stared.

"Well, I'm blamed if it ain't Billy Flint!" he exclaimed. "How'd you get in?"

"By the back door; I knew that you would make a fuss if I tried to get in this way."

"Ain't you takin' big chances?"

"I'd be taking bigger ones if I stayed away."

Sam mentally concluded that Will knew what he was talking about, though he could not understand it himself.

"What'll folks say?" he blurted.

Will's face grew dark with anger.

"What will they say?" he asked, quickly.

"What do I care what they say? What can they say that will be worse than what has been said?"

Sam backed down the steps. He had blundered, and feared Will's wrath.

"Of course, I didn't mean —" he stammered.

"Never mind," interrupted Will, "I have an errand for you to do. Go to the town clerk, and get a blank application for a marriage license."

"A — a what?" gasped Sam.

"I'm not crazy, Sam," said Will, who was much amused by Sam's astonishment. "Do as I've asked, and when there is any news worth telling you shall hear it first."

Sam started off without another word, and Will returned to his father and Barbara.

When Sam made his errand known to Mr. Wiggins, the town clerk, he was laughed at.

"No foolin' now," said Sam, impatiently. "I want one of them applications, and I want it quick."

"There you are," replied Mr. Wiggin, as he handed Sam the desired blank. "Better fill it out right here, Sam, and then I can give you the license without any delay."

"No; I guess I won't fill it out jest now," drawled Sam, with a grin.

"Perhaps you ain't quite sure of the lady's age."

"That's it, I ain't."

"I always thought that you'd get married sometime, Sam."

Sam had been joked so often about matrimony that it seldom annoyed him, and now that his inquisitor was wholly on the wrong scent he was greatly amused.

"Well," he replied, "most men do marry sooner or later."

"And in your case it's a good deal later," chuckled Mr. Wiggins.

"Yes; but you see I've seen so many blamed fools get married 'fore they'd cut all their second teeth I've kinder hung off," Sam retorted.

"Miss Sawyer's a nice kind of woman," ventured Mr. Wiggins, as he coughed, and looked at a picture on the wall. The grin on Sam's face disappeared.

"Who said anything about her?" he demanded, indignantly.

"I said that she was a nice kind of a woman. No harm in that, is there?" Mr. Wiggins mildly

asked, as he turned his weak little eyes on Sam, who did not dare to meet them with his own.

"No," grunted Sam, as he turned to go; "but I must be goin'."

"Good luck to you," called Mr. Wiggins, as Sam ran down the steps.

The town clerk and his wife had callers that evening, and Mr. Wiggins, thinking that the joke was too good to keep, told them of Sam's errand, not forgetting to say that during their conversation Miss Sawyer's name had been mentioned.

News germs spread faster and farther than any other kind of bugs. The next afternoon Miss Sawyer heard from reliable sources that she was to be married to Mr. Samuel Billings a week from Thursday at seven o'clock in the evening by the Rev. Thomas Morton, of Uphill Centre, who had married her father and mother forty years before. She also heard that her wedding-gown was to be of gray and white foulard silk, with lace trimmings, and that her other things were just *lovely*. There was more, but she fainted and missed it. Poor Lizzie, it was cruel, terribly cruel.

When Sam returned to the parsonage Will was at the door waiting for him.

"The old fool thought it was for me," said Sam.

"Your turn may come next," Will replied.  
"Got a pencil?"

"Yes."

"Then read the questions, and write the answers as I give them." Sam obeyed, though with difficulty, because his lantern flickered, and he was not "much at writin' anyhow."

"Goin' to be married to-night, Billy?" asked Sam, when the application had been filled out.

"Never mind; go and get the license," replied Will.

When Mr. Wiggins read the names on the blank which Sam brought on his second visit, he dropped the paper and jumped back with horror. Sam laughed outright as he picked it up and held it out to the fear-stricken man.

"Don't be scared," he said; "nobody in the parsonage touched it. I wrote it myself just as Billy Flint told me to."

Mr. Wiggins felt relieved and angry.

"Why didn't you tell me who it was for?" he demanded.

"'Cause you jumped at the answer without givin' me a chance," retorted Sam.

Without another word the town clerk made



out the license, and when it was finished gave it to Sam, who started quickly for the door.

"Next time," said Mr. Wiggins, stiffly, "you'll save yourself trouble by not being so close-mouthed."

"And next time," replied Sam, "you'd better not jump the creek till you get to it."

When Sam returned Will picked up the paper that was placed on the top step, thanked him, and turned to reënter the house.

"Say, Billy," said Sam, "what am I goin' to say to folks when they ask me?"

"Tell them all that you know."

"And s'posin' they asked me if you was married?"

"Tell them that if they live long enough they'll know sometime," replied Will, as he shut the door, and ran lightly up the stairs to the sickroom. Barbara met him at the door with her finger on her lips cautioning silence.

"He's asleep," she said.

Chapter XXV  
A Wedding and a Sermon

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THE warm, bright sun of early April made the Sabbath morning beautiful. Here and there patches of dainty green could be seen, and in some sheltered, sunny spots the daring bloom of the crocus had thrust itself into view — purple, yellow, and white.

On that day there was no happier home in the world than the parsonage. Mr. Flint had fully recovered; his wife had returned and was bustling nervously about trying to make up for lost time. Barbara and Will were there, and, in their undemonstrative way, very happy.

“What a beautiful morning for all of us,” said Mr. Flint, as he got up from the breakfast-table and went to the window. “Spring has come without — and within. Ah! if I had known, if I had been awakened earlier in life — ”

Barbara left her place at the table, ran quickly to him, and gently placed her fingers on his lips.

“Remember, you promised,” she said, smilingly.

“Yes, Barbara, but I expect to break my promise many — many times. When a man

has been born again how can you expect him to be silent? The world is all new to me, Barbara. Try to imagine what I have lost in my narrow, high-walled life. I must see everything; I must babble like a child if I will. Yet you, Barbara, modest girl that you are,— the one who saved my body, and put peace into my soul,— demand that I keep silence.” Mr. Flint spoke in a half-serious, half-humorous way, but they understood, and rejoiced at the change in his manner—and the man.

Barbara and Mrs. Flint began clearing the table, the minister retired to his study, while Will paced the sitting-room, deep in thought. When the door-bell rang a moment later Will answered its summons. It was Mrs. Stout, out of breath and flushed by her walk, but smiling.

“ Mornin’, Willie,” she puffed.

“ Good morning, Mrs. Stout; come in.”

“ Ain’t late, am I? ” she asked, anxiously, as she stepped into the hall and sat down in the nearest chair.

“ Oh, no.”

“ What a lovely mornin’ to get married. Now if ’twas me I’d — ”

“ Come right in to the sitting-room,” called Mrs. Flint, from the kitchen.

"All right," said Mrs. Stout, as she got up to welcome Barbara, who came out to meet her. "I just set down for a minute to ketch my breath. Well, Barbara Wallace, if you ain't lookin' fine for a woman that's been shut up in the house for weeks." Then Mrs. Stout shook her finger at Will and added: "Willie Flint, you're a lucky man."

"I know it, Mrs. Stout," laughed Will, as they went into the sitting-room. Just then Mrs. Flint appeared and shook hands cordially with Mrs. Stout.

"You will excuse me for coming this way, apron and all," she said, "but I was washing dishes, and —"

"Good land! yes, Mis' Flint. My, but you're lookin' better'n you have in years. And if here ain't Mr. Flint himself!" exclaimed Mrs. Stout, as the parson appeared in the doorway, and then hastened toward her with outstretched hand. "Mr. Flint," continued Mrs. Stout, as she shook his hand vigorously, "I was never so glad to see you before in all my life."

"And I can truly say the same of you, Mrs. Stout," laughed the parson.

"Well, forgive and forget, says I," said Mrs. Stout, quickly.

"Amen," replied Mr. Flint.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Flint, "I just can't finish those dishes. I —"

"Let 'em go," said Mrs. Stout; "nobody's s'posed to wash dishes when there's a weddin' comin' off in a few minutes, your own son's, too, and the best, sweetest woman in the whole wide world." And to prove that she meant every word she put her arms around Barbara and kissed the cheeks that grew pink with pleasure and modesty.

"And in you they have one of the best, truest friends possible," Barbara replied.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Stout, who was modest herself.

"No nonsense about it," Mr. Flint interposed, earnestly. "If it had not been for you and your kindness, where would we all be now?"

"Oh, well," replied Mrs. Stout, "you'd prob'ly been alive just the same."

"Ah, Mrs. Stout, but what is life without sunshine in our hearts? Barbara not only nursed me back to life — she showed me how to live. And you were her friend when all others failed, you saved her for the task."

"Well," sighed Mrs. Stout, resignedly, "I done what I thought was best."

"And God bless you for it," replied the minister, fervently. As he spoke the church-bell rang out on the warm spring air. He turned to Barbara and took her hand. "Barbara, dear, we have but a few moments — where shall it be?"

"Here," she said, "where the sun is brightest."

Barbara and Will, with clasped hands, stood near a window where the morning light lit up their bright young faces — faces filled with love and hope. The simple service — a promise and a prayer — was soon over. The tears were streaming down Mrs. Flint's cheeks as she greeted her son and his bride. Mrs. Stout's eyes, too, were moist, though she would have denied it. The church-bell was tolling. Mr. Flint had another duty to perform, and was impatiently eager to be about it.

"Come," he said, "we must be going."

"Do give us time to get straightened out," replied Mrs. Stout. "Us women folks can't go to a weddin' and then rush off to church in a minute, can we, Mis' Flint?"

Poor Mrs. Flint, she was so excited that, without Mrs. Stout's assistance, she could not get her bonnet on straight. In a few minutes they were

ready, however, and left the house together on their way across the road to the church.

As Barbara and Will, followed by Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Stout, walked up the aisle, every eye in the crowded church was fixed upon them. Were they married? No one knew. Sam Billings had told all that he knew, according to Will's instructions, but none were the wiser for all that.

That part of the service preceding the sermon was rushed, and the minister as well as the congregation assisted in the process. When the last note of the hymn had died away, and the rustling of the people sitting and making themselves comfortable had ceased, Mr. Flint left his seat, advanced quickly to the desk, and opened the large Bible. He turned the pages for a moment, and then looked up and repeated rather than read from the Book of Proverbs: "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips." Then he closed the book and walked slowly to the front of the platform.

"Friends," he began, in a quiet tone, so unlike his former manner that all wondered at it, "for a time God saw fit to take me from you. It is appropriate that at this season of the year, when

our part of the world is bursting forth into joyous, beautiful life, that He should send back, not the man you once knew, but another, one whose life is beginning anew like nature." He continued at length on the "new life" that had come to him. Suddenly he paused, and when he spoke again quoted these words: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches." He moved about nervously for a moment before continuing. "A few weeks ago the innocent act of a good woman caused her to be reviled, shunned, and turned away from our doors. Of those who so harmed her I was the chief offender. Every word, every act, was a cruel thrust, the torture of which none of us can wholly appreciate. And then she came when disease — the most loathsome — had stricken me, when all others shunned even the house in which I lay, she came and brought me back to life. And then — then she saved my soul!" The minister's face was pale; he made no gestures; he did not raise his voice; but his earnestness and remorse were unmistakable. "And my son," he continued, "he whom I should have guided, I have wronged by living a narrow, loveless life." Thus, for an hour he talked about the "new life," love, and remorse. But his closing words inter-



ested many of his congregation more than those that had preceded them.

"The son whom I have wronged, and the woman sent by God, have I this day made one," he said, and there was triumphant joy in his voice.

Barbara's friends — everybody was her friend now — kept their places with difficulty during the closing hymn and the benediction. As it was, they failed to give Mr. Flint time for an appropriate "Amen," before they rushed upon Barbara and Will, and almost suffocated them with sweet words.

When the last one had gone, Barbara, with the good wishes of everybody ringing in her ears, turned to Mr. Flint, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I — I don't deserve it, I —" she began, but he gently interrupted her.

"Yes, Barbara, every word is true." And then turning to Will asked, "Do you understand now, Will?"

"Yes, father," was the reply, and the two men clasped hands.

"Barbara," said Mr. Flint, as they were walking toward the door, "there is one word that I long to hear you say, I must hear it, you must not deny me any longer." Barbara stopped, she did not

understand. "It is the one word from your lips that will fill my cup of happiness to the brim," added the minister, feelingly. "Can't you guess?"

A light came into Barbara's eyes, and smiling through her tears she said:

"Father."

**Chapter XXV****Good Cheer — Good Will**

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SUCCESS, despite the tempestuous history of the first six months of their existence, was staring the Morning Glories in the face. The club had come to stay, and a prosperous and useful future was assured. Prosperity meant that the treasury, among other things, had become more than a name, and the members of the club became possessed with a desire to spend the money that had been so laboriously earned, that was as burning as had been the desire to get it.

“The gentlemen Morning Glories have just got to be entertained,” Mrs. Stout had declared at a meeting held the week following Barbara’s wedding. “It ain’t so much that we want to give them a good time, we want to show the men-folks that we can do somethin’ without makin’ a mess of it, though I must own that some good has come out of the trouble we’ve made already.” There was no opposition, in fact, the ladies were delighted with the idea. Accordingly, plans for a reception and dinner were quickly made and promptly executed.

On the day appointed for the function, two

weeks later, Mrs. Stout and Mrs. Blake stood in the gorgeously decorated Veterans' Hall, admiring the work of the committee, with the keenest satisfaction.

"Ain't it just elegant?" said Mrs. Stout.

"Beautiful," was Mrs. Blake's reply.

"Won't the men-folks be surprised?"

"They ought to be."

"I expect that my Peter won't say a word the whole evenin' long — he ain't used to such things. He tried to beg off, but I put my foot down and said: 'No, sir; we've made plans to entertain you men-folks, and you've just got to be entertained whether you like it or not!'"

"And what did he say to that?" asked Mrs. Blake, laughingly.

"'Give another show,' says he, 'if you want to please the men.' Did you ever hear or know of anything quite so queer as men? And say, Mis' Blake, what do you s'pose? I got Peter to go in town and get a real full dress suit."

"Really!" exclaimed Mrs. Blake, who could not imagine Peter Stout dressed in anything except a butcher's frock.

"Yes; I was just bound to have him dressed up once 'fore he died, anyway. Goodness! if

it ain't six o'clock. I must run home and help Peter get into his clothes, and get dressed myself."

With that Mrs. Stout scurried home, while Mrs. Blake lingered for one more look at the tables and decorations.

Two hours later the officers of the club, who formed the receiving party, were in their places. They stood on a white sleigh-robe, loaned for the occasion by undertaker Blake, and their background was a Japanese screen, which, on every other day in the year, could be found in the parlour of Mrs. Jones. They were flanked on either side by tabourets brought from the homes of Mrs. Tweedie and Miss Sawyer, on which reposed potted palms, the property of Mrs. Thornton, set in jardinières that Mrs. Darling's uncle, who was a sea-captain, had brought her from India, and that she "wouldn't have broken for worlds."

We common folk in common towns! What good times we do have, but how much greater would be our enjoyment did we not ape the apes of wealth.

Mr. So-and-so is always uncomfortable in his younger brother's dress suit. Mrs. What's-her-name feels as though the glittering brooch at her throat is on fire, because the gems are of paste.

Mrs. Up-on-the-hill fears that some one will discover that the beautiful opera cloak, which she threw off so proudly, belongs to a friend in the next town; and Mr. Ditto swears that never again will he wear hired clothes, and adds several postscripts.

Soon after eight o'clock, the receiving party were overwhelmed with business, common folk usually coming on time, despite their other faults, and Manville society was no exception to the rule. Some of the presentations were not as dignified as many of the Morning Glories desired, Peter Stout being one of the worst offenders. He began by tripping over the white sleigh-robe, which confused him so that he said everything that his wife had told him not to say, and not a word of the speech that she had informed him was the "perlite and proper thing." When the series of mishaps came to an end, he permitted the lady who had presented him to lead him to a seat, where he sat and glared into space, his face as red as raw beef, until his wife came to pilot him through the remainder of the evening.

Alick Purbeck said, "How d'y'," and passed on feeling well satisfied with himself. Deacon Walton's "Cal'late we'll have an early spring,"

the ladies cheerfully admitted. Sam Billings, dressed as he had never been dressed before, said, "Happy to meet yer," and then began a studied speech, but was dragged away before he got fairly started. Sam had been invited by Miss Sawyer. The difficulties which had made their wooing a thorn-strewn path had been cleared away, and once more Sam seemed, with some certainty of success, to be on the road to matrimony. When some one recently had attempted to joke him on the subject, he replied: "Seein' everybody's made up their minds that me and Lizzie was goin' to get married, we thought it would be too bad to disappoint 'em." Ezra Tweedie, poor, abused, dear little Ezra, was radiantly happy, and during the whole evening conducted himself in such a gentlemanly manner that, for the time being, he was the pride and joy of his crownless queen.

Then came the dinner. It was no Russian-tea-peanut-butter-frappé-affair — there were things to eat. As the good cheer went in, the good-will came out, reserve broke down, the murmur of voices grew louder, followed by laughter, hearty and spontaneous.

When the feasting was over, the toastmistress,

Mrs. Tweedie, arose and graciously welcomed the *other sex* without using her favourite term. Then came the toasts, varied, many in number, and followed by long responses. At midnight the feast of good-will had not abated.

Barbara and Will, blissfully happy, wherever they might be, had enjoyed the evening more than any one else. From the beginning everybody vied with everybody else in bestowing upon them kind words and good wishes. They tried to slip away before the others, but Mrs. Stout hurried after them.

“What are you runnin’ away for?” she demanded. “Has anybody been sayin’ things?”

“No, indeed,” replied Will, “not a word but kindness.”

“More than we deserve,” added Barbara.

“Nonsense; more than you deserve, the idea!” exclaimed Mrs. Stout, and then asked, wistfully, “Well, can you forgive us now? We’ve done all that we know how to do to make it right.”

“Don’t say ‘we,’ please, Mrs. Stout,” said Barbara. “As for the others, I forgave them long — long ago.”

“Bless you, dear child,” replied Mrs. Stout, and then she looked about as though in search



of something. "Goodness!" she exclaimed, "if I haven't lost Peter! Good night, if I don't find him pretty soon he'll be talkin' butter and eggs."

As Barbara and Will went out into the darkness, the sweet, south wind blew in their faces, and rustled the tiny leaves on the maples overhead.

"They were very kind to us to-night, Barbara," said Will. "But for you, dear, it has been a long, hard journey." He felt her hand tighten on his arm.

"Yes, Will, but the steepest paths lead to the most beautiful places."

"And you do not regret one step of the cruel way you have come?"

"Not one, Will."

"I'm glad you can say that, but I can't seem to understand. What is the secret?"

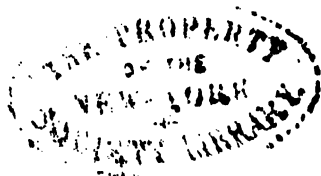
"Faith, Will."

"Faith?"

"Yes, it's God's way."

And thus they walked, and talked of God, and love, and the future, until in the east the sky was gleaming with gold.

THE END.



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## **L. C. Page and Company's Announcement List of New Fiction**

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By LILIAN BELL, author of "Hope Loring," "Abroad with the Jimmies," etc.

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By T. JENKINS HAINS, author of "The Black Barque," "The Windjammers," etc.

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The book reads like an extract from life, and the whole story is vivid and realistic with descriptions of the life of a party of gentlemen adventurers who are willing to run great odds for great gains.

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